

# LAEDC



*Coalition of One*

ECONOMY FOR ALL

Staff members across LAEDC were invited to contribute to the development of this report. Their presence reflects the intergenerational leadership that continues to shape the future of our region.

While the front cover centers the community reflected in this edition of the Affinity Report series, LAEDC's work is grounded in a culture of belonging that advances transformative impact. This work is built through partnership, championed by leaders across sectors, shaped by audacious contributors, and rooted in the needs of the Los Angeles region.

**Pictured in front cover order left to right:**

**Jose Pelayo**, Director of Workforce Development  
**Rick Davila**, Director of Information Systems & Facilities  
**Ricky Michel**, Research Administrator  
**Sonia Estrada**, Director of Accounting  
**Reymundo Valtierra**, Senior Accountant  
**Eric Ramos**, Multimedia Program Manager  
**Jorvin Avila**, Strategic Engagement Coordinator  
**Joel Martin**, Manager of Industry Engagement  
**Joseph Chicas**, Fund Development Director  
**Glenda Murakami**, Regional Manager

**Olivia Zhang**, Program Manager  
**Claudia Moreno**, Manager of Industry and Special Projects  
**Leonard Barrales**, Senior District Manager  
**Rafael Contreras**, Regional Manager  
**Pablo Martinez**, Asst. Program Manager  
**Mariana Hernandez**, Program Manager  
**Scarlet Peralta**, CJF Program Director

**Editor's Note:**

I often joke and tell people that my sole purpose at work is to focus on shapes and colors. I carry deep gratitude for the opportunity to grow, create, and contribute my creative skills and experience within such a dedicated team. Stepping into spaces like this has never felt small—it has felt meaningful, and at times, historic in its own quiet way. Every project we take on is more than just work; it is a chance to bring new perspectives, stories, and ideas to life. We are especially thankful for fearless leadership who lead with collaboration, openness, and inclusiveness, creating an environment where creativity can truly thrive.

At first, the idea of putting together a report of this size and caliber seemed daunting, but during the process I was inspired by our colleagues. The willingness to build together makes a lasting difference. It reminds me that success is not achieved alone, but through collective effort and trust. The support within this team has allowed us to show up fully, with both our professional skills and our cultural identity. That kind of space is not something we take for granted. It is through teamwork that we turn ideas into impact, and through creativity that we find purpose in what we do.

We are proud to be part of LAEDC, where we truly live believe in: *Coalition of One - Economy for All*



**Eric Ramos "E2"**,  
Multimedia Program Manager  
LAEDC



# THE REPORT'S PURPOSE:

This report is the third in a series of affinity-focused publications examining Black, Women, Latino, AANHPI, and LGBTQ leadership across Los Angeles County. Building on the foundation established in the inaugural report and the institutional lens advanced in the second, this edition centers the Latino community as a primary driver of the regional economy and examines the structural conditions that shape its full economic participation.

This report examines the role of the Latino community across the regional economy, including workforce participation, business formation, and industry presence, and analyzes how existing systems influence economic mobility, access to capital, and pathways to scale. It identifies where structural misalignment between the Latino community's role in the workforce and business base and the region's priorities for capital allocation, workforce development, and business growth limits Los Angeles County's economic performance.

It then documents where that misalignment exists, how it constrains performance, and what it will take to fully activate Latino economic power at scale.

Read alongside the broader affinity report series, the series contributes to multiple perspectives on Los Angeles County's economic present and future.



# LETTER FROM LAEDC BOARD CHAIR-ELECT



When we gaze at a vast forest, it is easy to admire its scale while overlooking the roots and trunks that give it strength and sustain its growth. The same can be true of the Los Angeles County economy. Its sheer size and global prominence can obscure the foundational economic engines that make that success possible.

In 2024, Los Angeles County surpassed \$1 trillion in Gross County Product. In the years ahead, our region will host some of the world's largest sporting events, while our ports continue to anchor global trade. Yet beneath this global economic force lies its most essential asset: the people and communities whose investment, sacrifice, and entrepreneurial grit power the entire system.

Among these, Latino communities are not peripheral to LA County's economy—they are one of its central pillars. Too often, however, this pillar has been undervalued or marginalized, particularly because of its vibrant immigrant roots and the persistent mischaracterization of Latino labor and entrepreneurship.

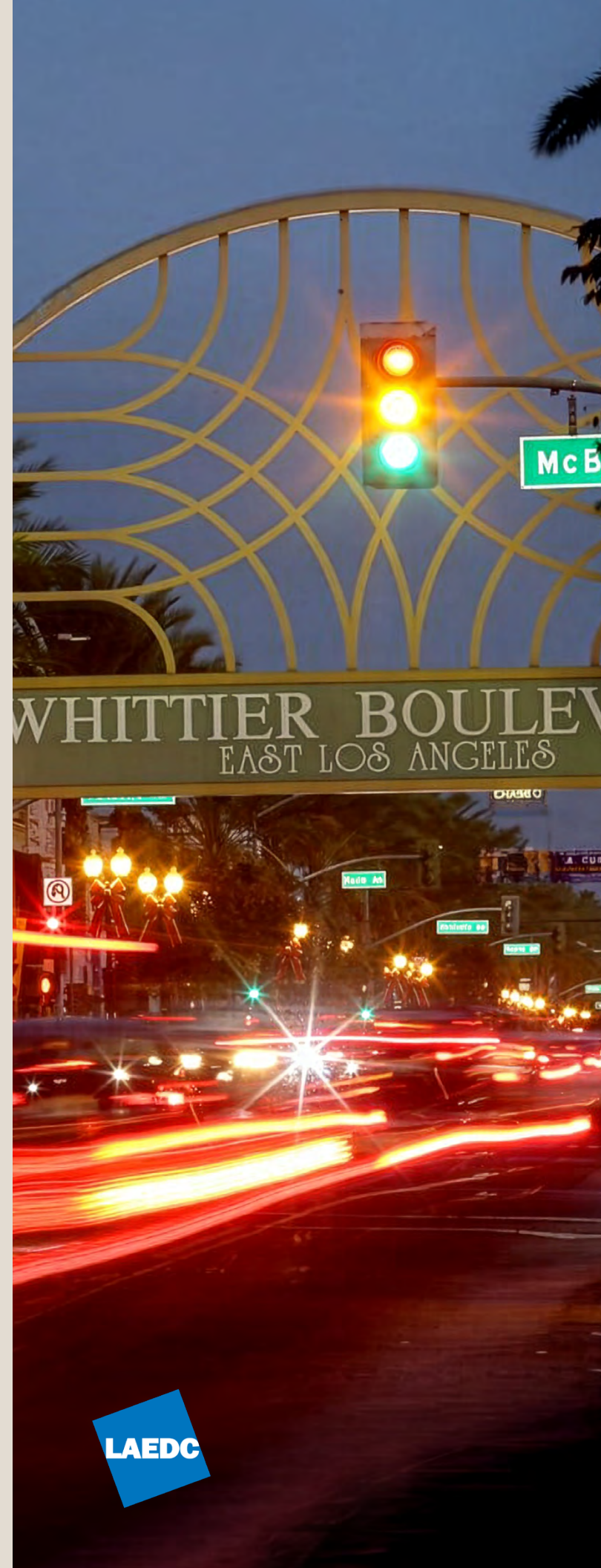
The Latino Report is part of a broader series produced by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation in recognition of a fundamental truth: Los Angeles' economic power is inseparable from the strength of its diverse communities. No industry, sector, or regional economic strategy succeeds without their complementary activity and shared synergy.

This report advances not simply a new narrative, but a data-driven one—clarifying the critical role Latino communities play in the region's economic success and resilience. As a lifelong Angeleno raised in the Southeast Cities region of the County—an historically vital artery of our goods-movement economy—this reality is deeply personal. Latinos have long been the lifeblood of this and many other industries. Yet for far too long, the prevailing narrative has framed Latino communities through a lens of liability or expendability, rather than opportunity and investment.

I am grateful to the LAEDC team for the courage this report represents. For policymakers, industry leaders, and philanthropic partners, I hope it underscores the linked fate between Latino economic opportunity and LA County's economic future—and highlights the stark dissonance between Latino economic output and the persistent gaps in Latino socioeconomic wellbeing.

Los Angeles thrives most when we recognize our interdependence and choose to invest in the success of all.

Sincerely,  
**Efrain Escobedo, Vice Chair-Elect**  
Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation



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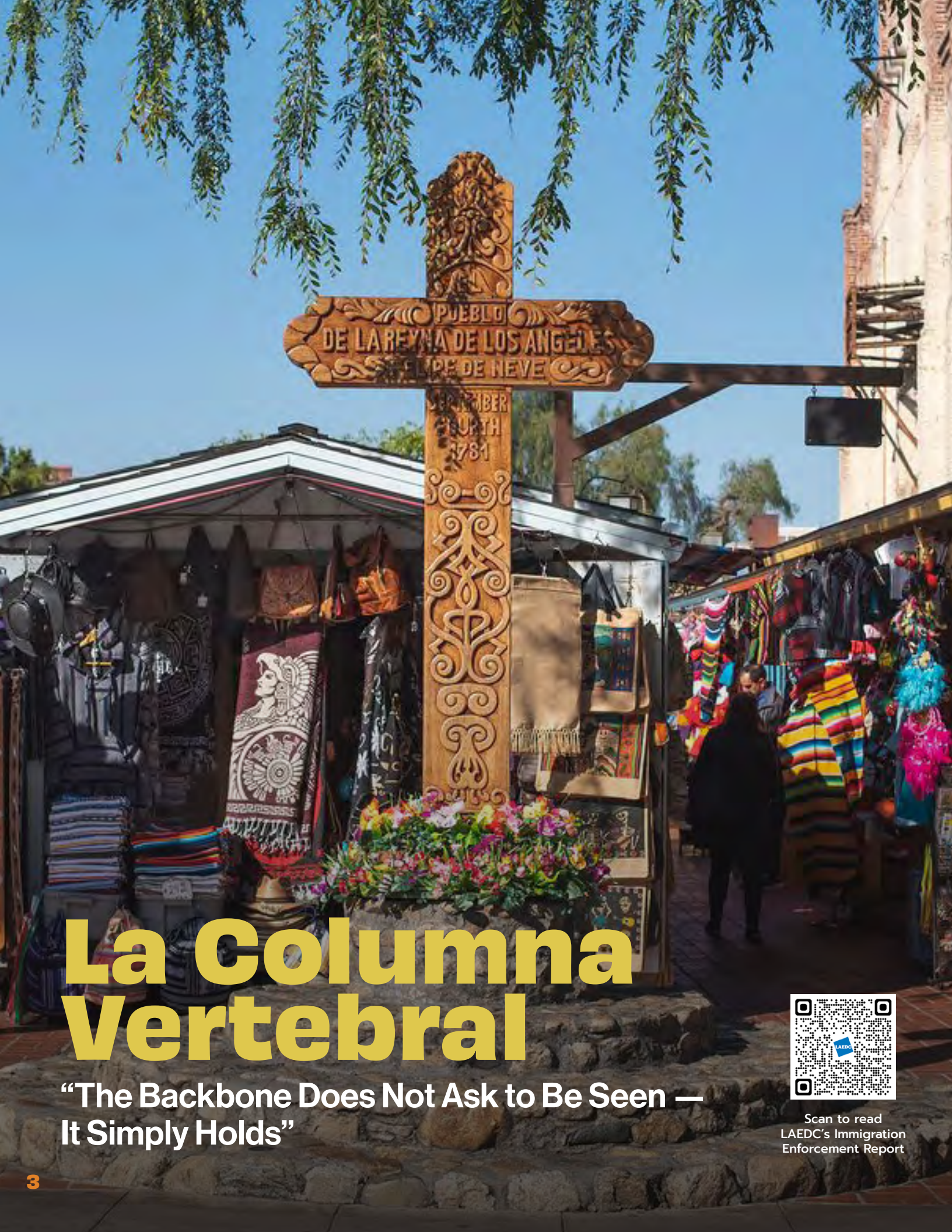
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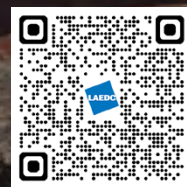
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# La Columna Vertebral

“The Backbone Does Not Ask to Be Seen — It Simply Holds”



Scan to read  
LAEDC's Immigration  
Enforcement Report

## There is a moment arriving for Los Angeles — and the world already has it on its calendar.

The World Cup. The Super Bowl. The Olympics.

When billions of eyes turn to this city, they will see the skyline, the culture, the energy, the spectacle. What they may not immediately see is what is holding all of it up.

This report is about that.

La Columna Vertebral — the backbone — does not announce itself. It does not need to. It is structural. It is foundational. Remove it, and nothing else stands. Strengthen it, and everything built on top of it rises.

For decades, Latinos have been the economic backbone of Los Angeles County — not as a metaphor, but as a measurable, documented, undeniable reality. We built the healthcare infrastructure that serves this entire region. We drive the entertainment economy that gives Los Angeles its identity on the global stage. We are the workforce behind the construction, the hospitality, the logistics, and the service networks that make this city function every single day. And in the wake of the most destructive wildfires in Los Angeles history, we were among the first to show up — to rebuild, to restore, to keep this city moving.

Every page of this report documents that truth in data, in sectors, across generations.

But this report does not exist in a vacuum. It was written during a year in which the federal government launched the largest immigration enforcement operation this region has ever seen — operations concentrated in the majority-Latino neighborhoods that this report identifies as the economic engine of Los Angeles County. Families were disrupted. Communities were shaken. The full economic consequences are still unfolding.

We name that here, at the beginning, not to center the story on pain — but because any honest account of Latino economic power must also reckon with the conditions under which it is exercised. Contribution does not happen in the abstract. It happens in real neighborhoods, by real people, navigating real pressures.

Because the world is coming to Los Angeles. And before they arrive, this city's leaders, institutions, investors, and partners deserve to understand who built what they are about to show the world — and what it has taken to build it.

By the time you reach the final page, you will not just understand what Latinos contribute to Los Angeles.

You will understand what Los Angeles would be without them.

Read with that in mind.



**Jose Pelayo**  
Director of Workforce Development,  
LAEDC



**Scarlet Peralta**  
CJF Program Director,  
LAEDC



RESEARCH

# La Economía Real

The Real Economy

## The economy has always known what the data refused to count.

For decades the conventional economic analysis of Los Angeles looked past las placitas – the neighborhood gathering spaces – and the street vendors, past the home-based businesses and the family remittances, past the informal networks that sustained entire neighborhoods through recessions, wildfires, and pandemics. It looked for capital flows it recognized. It measured what its tools were built to see. And what it couldn't see, it called marginal.

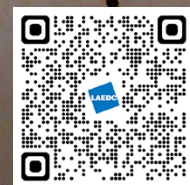
It was not marginal. Era la base – it was the foundation.

When you measure it correctly – the full economic contribution of Latino communities across every industry, every corridor, every generation – the priorities change. The investments align. The strategies reach the communities where the economic activity is actually occurring.

The data points to what has always been true. LAEDC's examination of the Latino wealth gap found a median Latino household net worth of \$59,380 – against \$256,000 for white non-Hispanic households. Not a social statistic. An economic inefficiency that costs this region billions in unrealized growth every single year. And when enforcement operations swept through the majority-Latino neighborhoods of LA County in 2025, the economic impact on Latino-owned businesses and Latino workers made visible what the data had long obscured – this community is not peripheral to the LA economy. Removing it doesn't slow the economy. It stops it.

La economía real – the real economy – has always been here. What this report does for the first time is put the full picture in one place – and count it the way it deserves to be counted.

**Ricky Michel,**  
Research Administrator,  
LAEDC



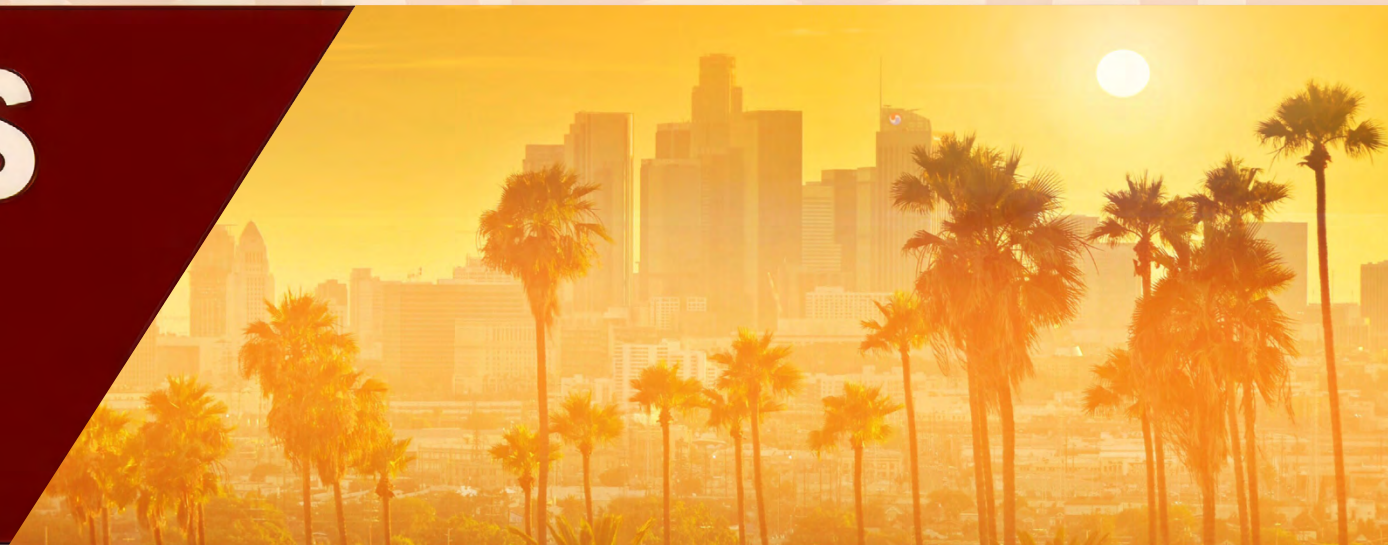
Scan to read LAEDC's  
Pathways to Prosperity:  
The Latino Wealth  
Building Report

# LA COLUMNA VERTEBRAL

THE BACKBONE OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S ECONOMY

**4.76 MILLION LATINOS**  
**48.8% OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

*This is not a segment of the economy.*  
**IT IS THE STRUCTURE THAT HOLDS IT IN PLACE.**



FOUNDATIONAL ACROSS THE REGION'S WORKFORCE, SMALL BUSINESS BASE, AND ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES.



### MEDIAN AGE

**34.2**

Among the youngest major populations in the region.

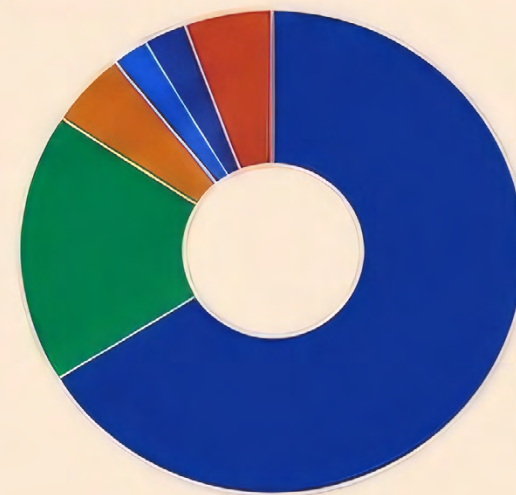


### GENDER DISTRIBUTION

**50% / 50%**

Balanced participation across the population.

### A REGION WITHIN A REGION



Mexican Origin	71%	(3.4M)
Central American	19%	(919K)
South American	4%	(167K)
Caribbean	2%	(88K)
Other	4%	(167K)



### ECONOMIC ROLE



NEARLY HALF OF THE COUNTY'S WORKFORCE



MAJOR DRIVERS OF SMALL BUSINESS FORMATION



FOUNDATIONAL ACROSS KEY INDUSTRIES THAT KEEP LA COUNTY RUNNING



**THE BACKBONE IS NOT STATIC. IT IS GROWING.**

#### UNDER 18

**1.16M**

(24%)

Future workforce in the pipeline

#### AGES 18-24

**513K**

Entering the workforce

#### AGES 25-34

**775K**

Prime working-age population

This is the current and expanding labor force of **Los Angeles County.**

## Partner Highlight

# The Wealth Gap Is Not a Mystery — It's a Policy Failure

The data is clear, and it is sobering. Latino families hold roughly \$0.22 in wealth for every dollar held by white families. In Los Angeles County, home to the largest Latino population of any county in the nation, that gap is not just a statistic; it is a lived reality. It shows up in homeownership rates, retirement security, business equity, and the ability to weather a single financial emergency. Nationally, the Latino community represents nearly 20% of the U.S. population but holds just 2.5% of the country's wealth. That is not an accident. It is the result of exclusion, underinvestment, and lack of policy design.

At LatinoProsperity, our report Mapping Access and Exclusion: Latino Home Purchase Lending Across California's Major Metropolitan Markets, 2018–2024 documents the persistence of lending disparities even when controlling for income and credit. Across California's six major metro markets, Los Angeles, the Inland Empire, San Diego, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Fresno, Latinos remain significantly underserved relative to their share of the population and their demonstrated demand for homeownership. In Los Angeles, despite Latinos representing the largest share of the population, they received a disproportionately small share of conventional mortgage originations. Across the state, the data shows patterns of geographic concentration in higher-cost FHA lending, limited access to conventional products, and persistent lender gaps in communities where Latino buyers are most active. Access to homeownership is the single most reliable on-ramp to intergenerational wealth in this country, and it remains structurally unequal.

The policy levers that matter are not complicated. They require political will. Expanding down payment assistance programs with targeted outreach to first-generation buyers, directing Community Reinvestment Act compliance toward communities of color, and investing in Latino-serving financial institutions and CDFIs would move the needle. So would expanding access to retirement savings vehicles and matched savings programs, tools that have long been designed around employer-based systems that leave out gig workers, informal sector employees, and the self-employed, who are disproportionately Latino. And treating Latino entrepreneurs with the same seriousness as any other economic engine, which means capital access, not just technical assistance.

The research gap is equally serious. Latino economic data is consistently undersampled, underanalyzed, and underreported. Federal surveys miss nuance across national origin, generation, immigration status, and geography. The field lacks longitudinal tracking of Latino wealth accumulation, or its destruction. LatinoProsperity exists to fill that gap. Our work, from HMDA analysis to the Latina Wealth Initiative, is grounded in the conviction that data without power is insufficient. That is why we also lead AI policy advocacy, pushing for Latino representation in the working groups, governance structures, and decision-making tables shaping artificial intelligence policy. The economic rules of the next generation are being written right now, in technology boardrooms and state capitols. If Latinos are not in those rooms, our communities will once again be left out of the design — and left to absorb the consequences. You cannot solve a problem you refuse to fully measure, and you cannot shape a future you are excluded from building.



**Orson Aguilar,**  
Founding President and CEO,  
LatinoProsperity

# In Los Angeles county, the Latino median wage is \$39k compared to the \$78k of whites.



## A 50% income gap.



# LATINO PROSPERITY

# LA ECONOMÍA REAL

CONTRIBUTION UNDERVALUED. POTENTIAL UNDERUTILIZED.

Latinos power the region's economy in measurable ways. But the economic return does not reflect the level of contribution.



THE GAP IS NOT A LACK OF EFFORT. IT IS A SYSTEMIC MISALIGNMENT.

The region benefits from the output. But too little of the value is returned.

## SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

Latinos are deeply embedded in the region's economic engine—creating, producing, building, and spending.



### DRIVE BROAD ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Latino economic activity is a significant driver of regional GDP.



### PRESENT ACROSS CORE SECTORS

Concentrated in industries that keep the county running—construction, logistics, hospitality, healthcare, retail, and more.

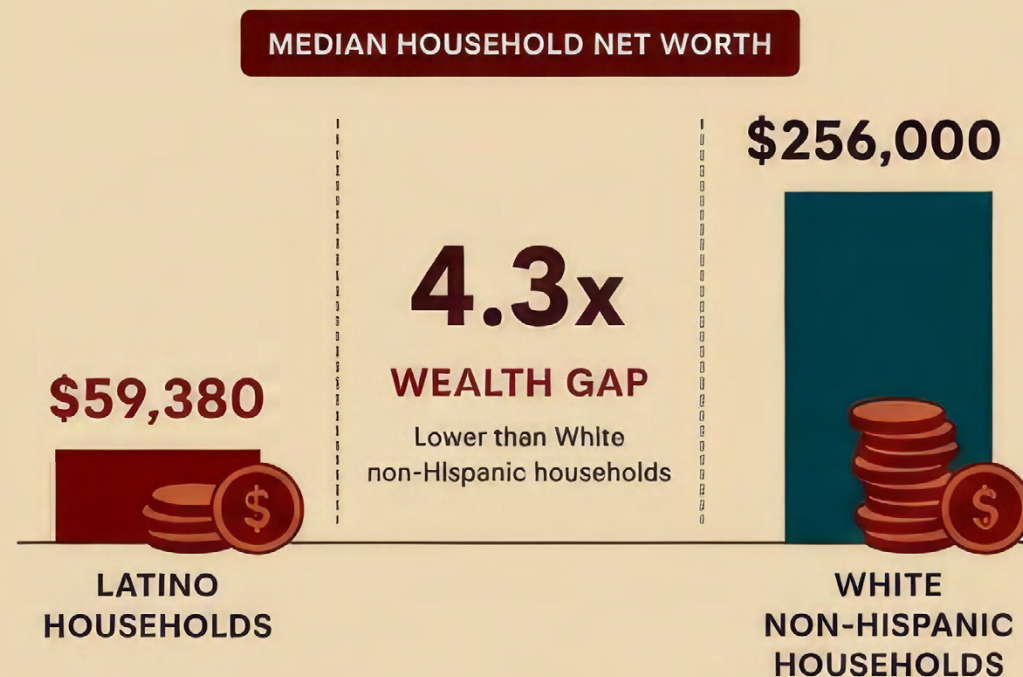


### ENTREPRENEURS AND CONSUMERS

Fuel business creation, job generation, and billions in consumer spending across the county.

## THE CONTRIBUTION-RETURN GAP

Latino households build the economy. But they capture far less of the economic return.



Source: Federal Reserve, Survey of Consumer Finances (2022)

## WHY CONTRIBUTIONS ARE UNDERVALUED

Structural barriers limit the ability to convert contribution into long-term economic security.



### WEALTH BUILDING BARRIERS

Lower starting point, fewer assets, and limited generational wealth transfer.



### CONSTRAINED ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Less access to lending, investment, and financial tools to grow and scale.



### INVESTMENT GAPS

Unequal access to quality education, networks, and resources that drive economic mobility.



### UNDERRECOGNIZED ECONOMIC VALUE

Informal work, small businesses, and community contributions are often overlooked in traditional measures.



**THE RESULT:  
VALUE CREATED.  
VALUE NOT CAPTURED.**

Closing this gap represents billions in unrealized economic growth for Los Angeles County.



### STRONGER FAMILIES

More wealth today. More opportunity for the next generation.



### STRONGER BUSINESSES

More capital. More jobs. More innovation and scale.



### STRONGER REGION

More investment. More growth. A more resilient Los Angeles County



WORKFORCE

# Sin Nosotros, Para

Without Us, It Stops

## Every industry in Los Angeles County has a foundation. And in almost every case, that foundation is Latino.

Los hospitales – the hospitals. The construction sites. The restaurant kitchens. The hotel floors. The wildfire cleanup crews. The ports. The distribution centers. The school cafeterias. The office buildings before anyone else arrives. Remove that foundation – and the entire operational infrastructure of Los Angeles County stops. Not slows. Not struggles. Stops.

And the generation that comes next is not waiting. They are in the biomedical sciences program at Lynwood High School. They are finishing their accounting degree at East LA College. They are the daughter of the home health aide studying to become the nurse. The son of the contractor studying to become the engineer. The granddaughter of the woman who fed the vecindad who is opening her first restaurant. They will be here when the world comes to Los Angeles. This community has never needed permission to show up. It never will.

And yet – the industries Latino workers power every day are not producing Latino leaders at the rate this community deserves. The workers are here. El talento – the talent – is here. The pipeline is full. What is missing is the investment, the exposure, and the pathways that move this generation from la base – the foundation – into the rooms where decisions get made.

The only question is whether Los Angeles will recognize that before another county does.

Sin Nosotros, Para. Without us, it stops. With us fully invested – it transforms.

**Jose Pelayo**

*Director of Workforce Development,  
LAEDC*



# SIN NOSOTROS, PARA.

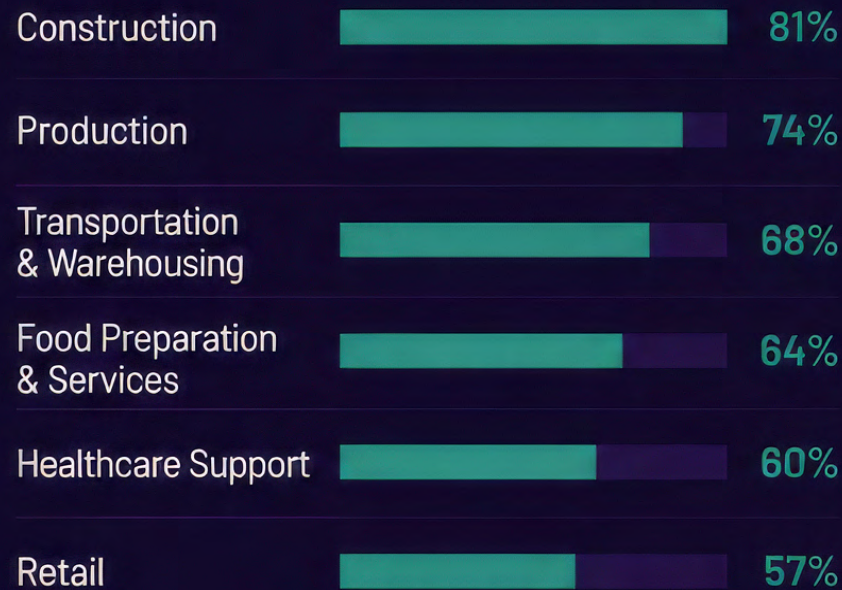
## *Without Us, It Stops.*

The workforce powers the economy, but its position within the labor market determines how value is captured.

**THIS IS NOT A PIPELINE PROBLEM.**  
**THE PIPELINE IS FULL. IT IS A CEILING PROBLEM.**

### POWERING THE FLOOR

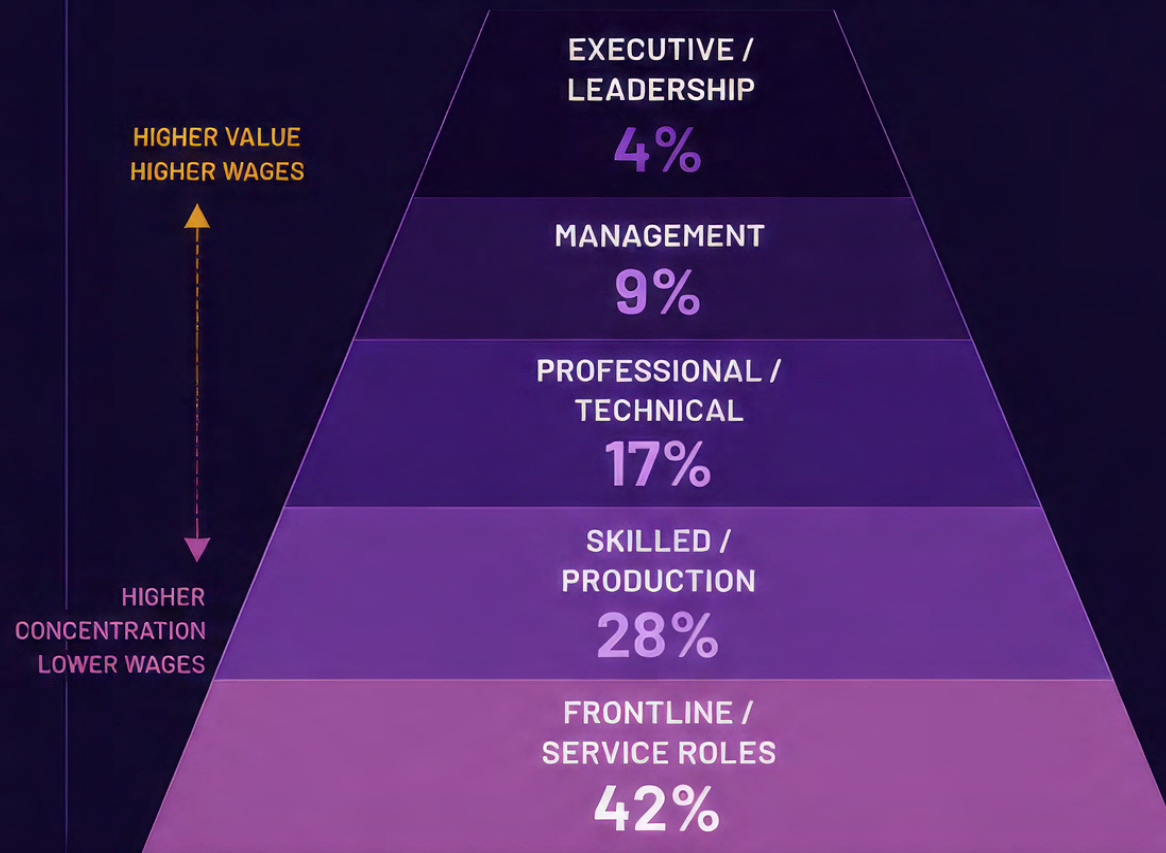
SHARE OF LATINO WORKERS BY INDUSTRY



Source: 2024 ACS PUMS 5-year

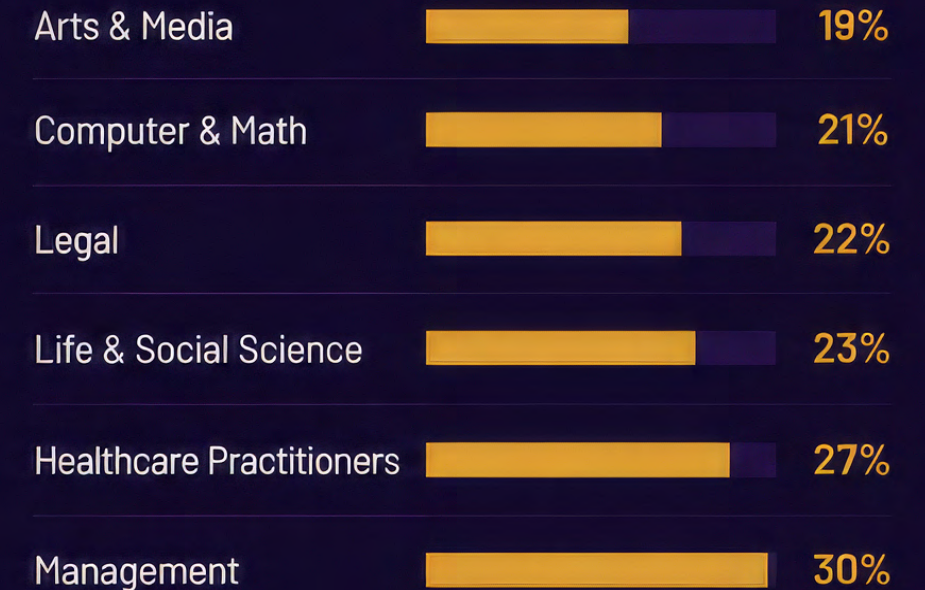
### THE WORKFORCE PYRAMID

CONCENTRATION OF LATINO WORKERS BY OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL



### WHERE THE CEILING HOLDS

SHARE OF LATINO WORKERS BY OCCUPATION



Source: 2024 ACS PUMS 5-year

### THE WAGE DIVIDE

MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGES

LATINO MEDIAN WAGE

**\$39,102**

WHITE NON-HISPANIC MEDIAN WAGE

**\$78,204**

LATINO MEDIAN WAGE IS

**50%**

OF WHITE NON-HISPANIC MEDIAN WAGE

Source: 2024 ACS PUMS 5-year

**POSITION, NOT PARTICIPATION, DRIVES OUTCOMES.**

The workforce powers the economy, but its position within the labor market determines how value is captured.

**LOWER WAGES**  
Concentration in lower-wage roles limits income growth.

**LIMITED MOBILITY**  
Barriers to advancement restrict movement into higher-value roles.

**WEALTH IMPACT**  
Lower lifetime earnings translate into less wealth across generations.

## Partner Perspective

# Lynwood Unified School District. Strong Workforce Program.

Lynwood Unified School District serves a predominantly Latino community in Southeast Los Angeles County, with approximately 95–97% of students identifying as Latino. The district's work is grounded in Vision 2030, which focuses on unlocking student potential, cultivating talent, uplifting the community, and modeling excellence. Career Technical Education (CTE) is a central strategy for advancing these goals and expanding access to economic mobility.

High school pathways are aligned to regional labor market demand and include health and biomedical sciences, engineering and advanced manufacturing, computer science, culinary arts and hospitality, arts/media, and transportation and trades. Each pathway integrates real-world application through capstone projects, portfolios, and partnerships with local colleges and industry.

Over the next several years, the district is focused on strengthening and expanding high-quality programs in health sciences, culinary arts, and engineering/computer science. This work is supported by the Golden State Pathways Program (GSPP) and the K–12 Strong Workforce Program (SWP), which provide resources to enhance instructional quality, expand access to industry-standard equipment, and increase student participation in high-demand career pathways. These priority areas are intentionally aligned with the Los Angeles Regional Consortium (LARC) Regional Plan and LAEDC's identification of high-demand, high-growth industries, ensuring that program development reflects current and projected workforce needs.

The district is also in plans using K12 SWP funds to have pathways reflect changes in the workforce. This includes integrating artificial intelligence (AI) literacy and applications across programs, ensuring students understand how emerging technologies are impacting multiple industries. In addition, Lynwood USD will also expand opportunities for students to develop entrepreneurship skills, including problem-solving, innovation, and business fundamentals that can be applied across career fields.

CTE programs are designed in partnership with community colleges and industry to ensure alignment with workforce needs and to provide students with clear postsecondary transitions. Students graduate with a combination of academic preparation, technical skills, and real-world experience that positions them for both college and career.



**Juan Barroso,**  
Career Technical Education Coordinator,  
Lynwood Unified School District

## THE PIPELINE IS FULL — AND EXPANDING

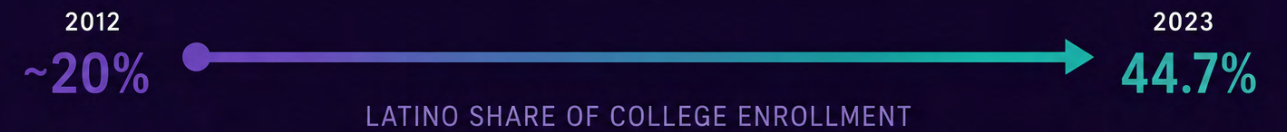
# 44.7%

LATINO SHARE OF  
COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

# 43.1%

LATINO SHARE OF  
DEGREE COMPLETIONS

Up from substantially lower levels a decade ago.



Source: IPEDS, U.S. Department of Education



# LYNWOOD

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Lo Construimos.

*Carrying the base.  
Underrepresented at the top.*

Latinos are the backbone of LA County’s healthcare system—powering the work, supporting the patients, and keeping institutions running. Yet representation drops sharply at the top, where decisions are made and value is captured.

## WHO HOLDS THE SYSTEM

54.5%

LATINA SHARE OF  
HEALTHCARE SUPPORT ROLES

28.6%

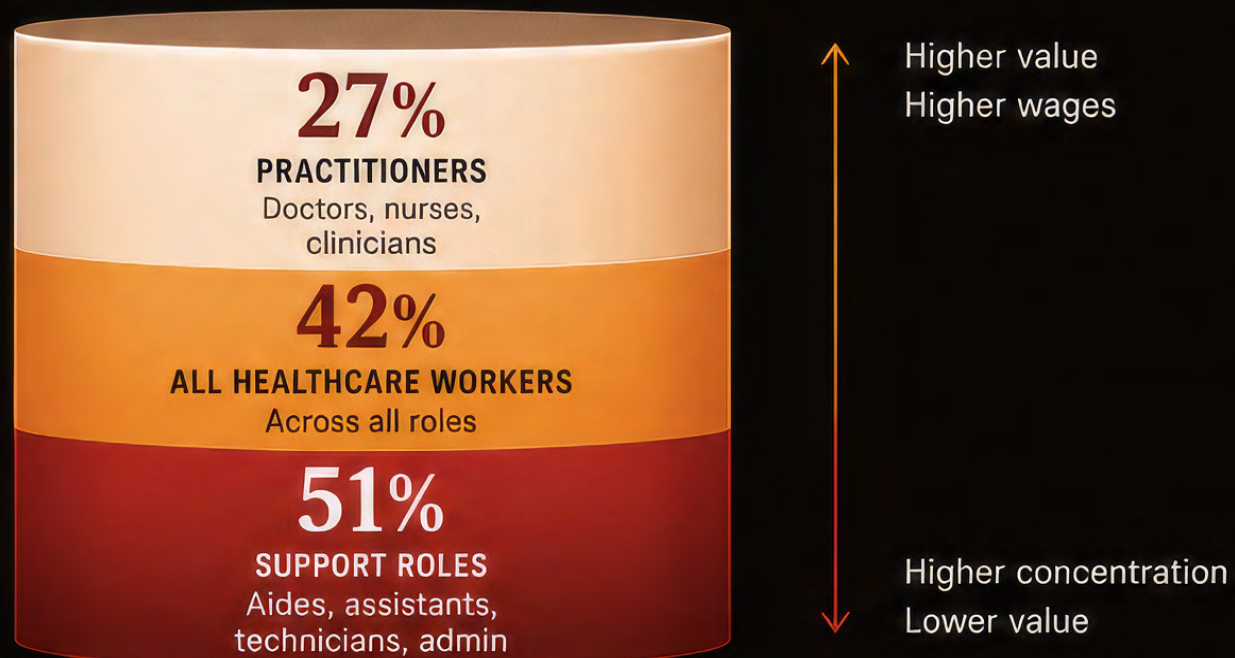
LATINA SHARE OF  
HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS

Source: 2024 ACS PUMS 5-year



## THE STRUCTURAL GAP

Representation drops as value increases.



Source: 2024 ACS PUMS 5-year



## THE PIPELINE IS STRONG

43%

OF HEALTHCARE-RELATED DEGREES

The next generation is already trained.

Source: IPEDS 2023–24 data collection, reference year 2023



**THIS IS NOT A TALENT GAP.  
IT IS AN INVESTMENT GAP.**

The workforce is already **in place.**

The next generation is already **trained.**

The system has not **caught up.**

# La Clínica Se Convirtió en Sistema

## Healthcare

Healthcare in Los Angeles County es nuestra historia. With nearly half the population identifying as Latino, this community drives healthcare demand, workforce innovation, and institutional transformation across the region. But the deeper story isn't just utilization—it's creation. Latino leaders built some of the most powerful healthcare institutions in Southern California from nothing: no inherited capital, no established networks, no guarantee of survival. They built anyway.

AltaMed began as a single storefront clinic in Boyle Heights. Clínica Monseñor Oscar A. Romero opened its doors in 1983 to serve undocumented Central American refugees in Pico-Union when no one else would. CHLA's Southern California Center for Latino Health grew from advocacy, not endowment. Today, these institutions collectively serve hundreds of thousands of patients annually, employ thousands, and anchor the region's healthcare economy—billion-dollar legacies born from grassroots of urgency and fear.

The promotora model extends this founding spirit into everyday life. Estas mujeres—community health workers rooted in East LA and spreading county-wide—bridge gaps in care through culturally grounded education, improving outcomes and reducing costly emergency visits. This isn't just public health. It's economic innovation that multiplies from the ground up.

Leaders like Castulo de la Rocha, who transformed AltaMed into a comprehensive network spanning LA and Orange Counties, show what nuestra gente produces when given room to grow. Today, institutions including USC's Keck School of Medicine and Clínica Romero are advancing integrated care and culturally responsive research, ensuring Latino voices lead in shaping health policy.

Latino communities didn't just need the system. Lo construimos.



**Leonard Barrales,**  
Senior District Manager,  
LAEDC



"El Corrido de Boyle Heights" mural, Photo Credit: Ángel Lizarraga

## Partner Perspective

# From Community Clinic to Economic Engine

AltaMed's story begins not with scale, but with a line - one that stretched around the block outside a small East Los Angeles clinic in the late 1960s. Families waited for hours, often without certainty they would be seen, because for many in Latino and immigrant communities, the healthcare system simply did not exist. In that moment, a different model took root - one born out of Civil Rights and Chicano Movement activism, and a belief that healthcare is a human right.

In 1977, Cástulo de la Rocha joined the East LA Barrio Free Clinic, a volunteer-run effort founded by the Brown Berets and the Adelitas to serve patients excluded from traditional care. What began as a storefront operation evolved over nearly five decades into AltaMed Health Services: the largest Federally Qualified Health Center network in the nation. Today, with Cástulo at the helm as president and CEO, the organization operates more than 80 sites, serves over 700,000 patients annually, and stands as proof that community-rooted care can scale without losing its soul.

That growth was driven not by ambition, but by trust. AltaMed's model is built on meeting people where they are: geographically, culturally, and economically. Clinics are embedded in neighborhoods, staffed by providers who reflect the communities they serve, and designed to honor language, culture, and lived experience. Over time, this approach became more than a care model; it became infrastructure - integrating wellness, prevention, and connection into everyday life.

That philosophy extends to the healing environment itself. Across AltaMed's network, one of the nation's largest collections of Chicano art transforms clinics into cultural spaces that reflect the history and resilience of the communities they serve. The collection is not ornamental, but intentional, reinforcing dignity, reducing stress, and affirming that healing is as much emotional and cultural as it is clinical.

From this foundation, AltaMed has emerged as a powerful economic engine across Southern California. Between 2019 and 2024, the organization generated \$15.1 billion in economic activity, supporting up to 12,000 jobs annually and contributing billions in household spending. As one of the region's largest employers, AltaMed's impact extends into local businesses, workforce pipelines, and neighborhood development, strengthening the conditions that make health possible.

Central to this impact is the workforce itself. Latino communities are not only the primary patient population, but the backbone of the organization. Many employees live in the neighborhoods they serve, and many first came to AltaMed as patients or family members of patients. Through workforce programs, educational partnerships, and training initiatives, AltaMed is building a pipeline of talent that is bilingual, culturally fluent, and deeply connected to community.

AltaMed offers a clear lesson for the future of healthcare and economic development: proximity matters. Systems designed around people, rather than institutions, are more resilient, efficient, and equitable. At a time of rising costs and persistent access gaps, the community health center model provides a durable blueprint: showing that value-based care, paired with community investment, can improve outcomes while sustaining financial discipline.

AltaMed's evolution underscores a simple truth: health does not exist in isolation. It is shaped by where people live, work, and belong. By investing in the whole community, not just the point of care, AltaMed continues to redefine what healthcare infrastructure can be, shaping a more inclusive and prosperous future for Los Angeles.



**Cástulo de la Rocha,**  
*President and CEO,*  
*AltaMed Health Services*

**"Latino communities are not only the primary patient population, but the backbone of the organization. Many employees live in the neighborhoods they serve, and many first came to AltaMed as patients or family members of patients."**

# AltaMed

Your community health network

# Inteligencia Artificial

## Artificial

Artificial intelligence is restructuring the global economy. The question for Los Angeles is not whether Latinos will be affected. It is whether the region will recognize that its AI future depends on its Latino presence.

The data is already structural. Latino representation in technical AI roles grew between 48.7% and 58.7% from 2018 to 2022, outpacing the 10.8% growth rate of the total U.S. workforce by a factor of nearly five.<sup>1</sup> STEM degree attainment among Latinos surged 101.6% over the past decade, and Latino computer science degree recipients jumped 180% between 2011 and 2022.<sup>1</sup> Nationally, Latinos earned nearly one-third of all STEAM degrees in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the pipeline has not reached the positions that shape the technology. Despite representing 19% of the U.S. population, Latinos hold fewer than 10% of technical roles and remain vastly underrepresented in senior leadership across major tech firms.<sup>1</sup> Only 11% of AI specialists are Latino, compared to 67% who are white.<sup>3</sup> More than 20% of Latino workers report concern about job displacement from AI automation<sup>4</sup>, and AI systems themselves routinely default to cultural stereotypes when representing Latino identities.<sup>3</sup>

In a region where Latinos comprise nearly half the population and the largest share of the workforce, this gap is not an equity issue. It is an output constraint. The institutions, employers, and training systems that invest in Latino AI talent are not performing inclusion. They are building the workforce that the region's largest economic actors require to compete.



**Joseph Chicas,**  
*Fund Development,*  
*LAEDC*





STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

# La Red Que Construimos

The Network We Built

## Economic transformation doesn't announce itself.

It shows up quietly — in a workforce director who stayed late to connect a job seeker to the right program, in a community org that knew which employers were actually hiring and which ones weren't ready. In the knowledge passed between people who understood this region long before any system tried to map it. Ese conocimiento — that knowledge — was always the infrastructure.

The California Jobs First — Los Angeles County Collaborative was built to scale it.

Coordinated by LAEDC, and the California Community Foundation (CCF), the California Jobs First - Los Angeles County Collaborative brings together more than 800 cross-sector partners — workforce agencies, employers, community colleges, unions, philanthropy, and community-based organizations — aligning investment in the industries and corridors defining this region's future. One of the most ambitious regional economic development efforts in California's history. And one that could not function without the Latino-led organizations at its center.

These partners are not filling seats at a table. They are driving the work — building talent pipelines, supporting small business ecosystems, advancing investment in historically overlooked corridors, and delivering the wraparound support that makes economic participation real, not theoretical.

And they are doing it with their eyes on what's next. Clean energy. Biotech. Advanced manufacturing. The Collaborative's sector activation work is designed to ensure Latino workers, businesses, and organizations are shaping these industries from the inside — not waiting for an invitation. La comunidad isn't catching up to the emerging economy. In many corridors, they are leading it.

The goal was never just economic development. It was an LA economy that finally reflects la gente que la construyó.

**Scarlet Peralta**  
CJF Program Director,  
LAEDC



# LA Green Technology Social Enterprise

The LA Green Technology Social Enterprise trains Opportunity Youth — ages 18 to 24 — for careers in electric vehicle and hydrogen fuel cell technology, while building a self-sustaining business converting diesel trucks to zero-emission vehicles.

In LA County, there are 513,000 Latino young adults in that age range. They are the generation that will power the clean energy transition with either include or leave behind. The stakes are \$39K median Latino wage — and what a high-road technical career pathway changes about that number.

# 513K

**LATINO YOUNG ADULTS  
AGES 18-24**  
in Los Angeles County



The generation that will power the clean energy transition.



## THE TRANSITION IS ALREADY LATINO.

Manufacturing, transportation, production, and construction — the industries at the center of LA's clean energy and advanced manufacturing transition — are majority Latino today.

The Collaborative's sector activation work is not building a pathway into these industries for Latino workers. It is ensuring that as these industries transform, Latino workers move up with them — into higher-wage roles, ownership, and leadership — rather than being displaced by the transition.

# California Jobs First — Los Angeles County

The California Jobs First – Los Angeles County Collaborative coordinates more than 800 cross-sector partners — and more than 100 of them are Latino-serving organizations, a reflection of the communities that make up nearly half the county's workforce.

For the first time in the region's history, the cross-sector infrastructure coordinating economic development in LA County is built to include Latino-serving organizations as full partners in the work — more than 100 of the Collaborative's 800+ partners.

They are driving workforce pipelines, supporting small business ecosystems, and delivering the wraparound support that makes economic participation real alongside government agencies, employers, colleges, unions, and philanthropy.



# 800+

**CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERS**

Cross-sector partners in the CJF-LA Collaborative spanning government, employers, colleges, unions, and philanthropy.



# 100+

**LATINO-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS**

Latino-serving organizations within the Collaborative — more than 1 in 8 of partners.



**More than 1 in 8 partners in the Collaborative is Latino.**  
That representation reflects power — and it drives results.



## Partner Perspective

# L.A. Green Technology Social Enterprise

The L.A. Green Technology Social Enterprise was built on a simple but powerful premise: the clean-energy transition should not leave our communities behind—it should be driven by them.

At its core, this initiative is a workforce and business innovation model designed to tackle two crises at once—climate change and economic inequity. It trains Opportunity Youth, ages 18 to 24, many from the San Gabriel Valley and surrounding underserved neighborhoods, for careers in electric vehicle and hydrogen fuel cell technology. But it goes further than training. The enterprise is designed to become a self-sustaining, revenue-generating business that converts diesel and gas-powered trucks and heavy equipment into zero-emission vehicles—creating real jobs, supporting California’s zero-emission mandates, and building an affordable electrification pathway for fleet owners navigating CARB’s Advanced Clean Trucks and Advanced Clean Fleets regulations.

What makes this model distinctive is what it refuses to accept: that opportunity youth—young people disconnected from school and work—should be left out of the industries shaping our future. In practice, that means removing the barriers that have always kept these communities out: offering paid training, transportation support, mentorship, and career navigation. It means building a learning environment that is culturally relevant and free from the biases that have historically limited access to technical fields. It means making sure participants feel seen, valued, and equipped to lead.

For Latino workers and families across L.A. County, the stakes could not be higher. Latino workers make up a significant share of our region’s current and future labor force—yet wage gaps and limited access to quality career pathways remain persistent realities. As EV adoption accelerates and demand grows for clean transportation workers, charging infrastructure specialists, and automotive technicians, this initiative is about ensuring Latino families share directly in the economic gains of that transition. That means stronger household incomes, greater intergenerational stability, and elevated economic influence for Latino communities at the center of the green economy—not on its margins.

None of this happens alone. Unions bring high-road standards and real mobility. Workforce agencies provide funding and system alignment. Employer partners keep training connected to actual demand. The cross-sector coalition at the heart of this model exists because generational inequity requires a collective response—one rooted in solidarity and a shared commitment to dignified, sustainable careers.

Success, ultimately, looks like transformation: opportunity youth in family-sustaining jobs, Latino workers positioned at the forefront of a clean economy, and a regional model where green growth reduces poverty rather than deepening it. Communities long excluded from prosperity—finally driving the future forward.



**Armando Loza,**  
*Executive Director,  
Miguel Contreras Foundation*

**“A future worth fighting for is one where technology closes gaps instead of creating them — where historically neglected communities rise with new opportunity, where labor is present, and workers stand at the forefront, trained, empowered, standing in solidarity and leading the way forward”**





SPECIAL PROJECTS & DISASTER RECOVERY

# Después del Fuego

After The Fire

## The 2025 Los Angeles wildfires caused tens of billions in damage across communities of every background—from Altadena to Pacific Palisades.

This is a multiracial recovery story. Black families in Altadena, Latino communities across the corridor, and higher-income households in the Palisades all felt the impact. Pero mientras Los Ángeles se reconstruye, one truth must be stated clearly: the industries driving recovery—construction, remediation, debris clearing, landscaping, and site restoration—are powered by Latino workers.

The hands rebuilding Los Angeles are largely Latino hands. That is not a political statement. It is a workforce fact.

Across the region, Latino workers are restoring homes, rebuilding infrastructure, and sustaining recovery in communities they may never be able to afford to live in. No es nuevo. This is not a moment they are stepping into—it is a role they have always carried in this city.

Latinos are doing the work. Deben ser reconocidos y empoderados.

The challenge is not whether the workforce exists—it already does. The challenge is whether systems will recognize, invest in, and create real pathways for the people and businesses already doing the work.

Latino workers are not temporary. We are the foundation. If we are the ones rebuilding Los Angeles, we must also have the power to shape what it becomes.

**Joel Martin,**  
Manager of Industry Engagement,  
Workforce Development,  
LAEDC



# DEPENDENCIA EN TIEMPO REAL

## Wildfire Recovery & the Latino Workforce

Los Angeles County

The 2025 Los Angeles wildfires left tens of billions in damage across communities from Altadena to Pacific Palisades. This is a multiracial recovery story. One workforce fact must be stated clearly. The industries driving recovery such as construction, remediation, debris clearing, landscaping, and installation are overwhelmingly Latino.

**This is not a new role. It is a permanent one.**

**217K**

Latino construction workers

**72.6%**

of the industry

**160K**

Latino building and grounds workers

**85.6%**

of the occupation

**156K**

Latino remediation and waste workers

**65.7%**

of the industry

## LA RECUPERACIÓN ES LATINA

The industries that rebuild Los Angeles after crisis are majority Latino across the board.

**850K+**

Latino workers across recovery sectors

The size of the recovery workforce already in place.

# CUANDO LOS ÁNGELES SE RECONSTRUYE

## THIS IS THE WORKFORCE.

The workers who clear debris, restore homes, rebuild infrastructure, and stabilize communities are overwhelmingly Latino.

Recovery does not activate a new workforce. It relies on one that is already in place.

The workers essential to Los Angeles recovery are already in place. The system relies on them to function.

## LAS LATINAS TAMBIÉN SOSTIENEN LA RECUPERACIÓN

**47.6%**

of Latino construction workers are female

**89.3%**

Latina share of building and grounds workers

**LA RECUPERACIÓN DEPENDE DE ESTA FUERZA LABORAL. THE SYSTEM DOES NOT FUNCTION WITHOUT IT.**

## Partner Perspective

# Springing Into Action To Support The Most Vulnerable

Just days after the LA wildfires exploded, our team at Inclusive Action for the City sprung into action to support outdoor workers, such as street vendors, landscapers, and recyclers. We know that low-wage, informal workers and entrepreneurs are amongst the most vulnerable during times of crisis – many cannot afford to miss days of work, and are often overlooked or excluded from social safety nets or relief efforts. Those that work outside face health and safety risks from storms or extreme heat. In the case of the fires, workers faced unsafe air quality and ash rained down on our neighborhoods, also destroying some street vendors' goods.

Through the Open Air Worker Emergency Fund, Inclusive Action raised funds to provide cash assistance to support outdoor workers who lost homes, equipment, income, jobs, or were impacted by the fires in other ways. Between January and April 2025, we distributed more than \$2.5 million in the form of \$500 cash cards to 5,157 impacted outdoor workers. Our team leveraged the networks and trust we have in the community – and our infrastructure and experience from providing cash relief during the COVID pandemic – to get resources out quickly to workers in need. We also partnered with trusted community organizations – such as NDLO, CLEAN Carwash Worker Center, and CARECEN – to reach more outdoor workers.

Unfortunately the fires were just one of the crises confronting our communities in 2025. Throughout the year, the Trump administration also escalated its attacks on immigrant families, accelerating fear and economic disruption for immigrant workers and small business owners. Despite enormous obstacles and interconnected challenges, workers and entrepreneurs continue to persevere – with limited support and resources.

Beyond our direct services, we also engage in community-centered research and advocacy to support immigrant entrepreneurs, protect street vendors, expand the social safety net – and build community resilience before the next crisis. In the summer of 2025, we joined academic and community partners to publish a groundbreaking report – *Confronting Disaster* – with original data that shows the racialized displacement risks facing long-term Altadena residents, especially Black Altadenans, as outside investors rush in. The report makes concrete policy recommendations for local and state leaders to protect families from displacement and preserve Altadena's historic neighborhoods and residents. Building on this research, we were proud to join a coalition of Altadena community leaders and organizations to advocate for a community landbanking strategy to keep Altadena land in Altadena hands.

In the fall of 2025, we also launched our Rooted & Rebuilding fund, providing grants and capital, as well as business coaching for fire-impacted small businesses in Altadena and surrounding areas. To date, we have distributed more than \$500,000 in grants to 52 businesses. Approximately 60% of these businesses were legacy businesses, and many have received no other support.

We will continue to advocate for a just recovery for the workers and small businesses impacted by the fires.



**Rudy Espinoza,**  
CEO,  
*Inclusive Action for the City*

**“When a crisis strikes, community organizations like ours step up to fill vital gaps in the social safety net to provide resources and support for low-wage, informal, immigrant workers and entrepreneurs. While we’re proud to support our communities in this way, we know that it isn’t enough – fostering true economic resilience means we need fundamental change to our economic systems, and investment from all levels of government in a social safety net that includes the most vulnerable people.”**

INCLUSIVE  
ACTION  
FOR THE CITY



BUSINESS

# Del Puesto al Negocio

From Stand To Business

## Doña Florinda didn't open a restaurant. She fed her vecindad.

For years, su cocina era su negocio — tortillas wrapped for the morning shift, caldos simmering by noon, orders placed by people who already knew her name. No storefront. No license. No capital. Just demand, and the discipline to meet it every day.

Latino-owned businesses in Los Angeles grew by 44% over five years, while overall business formation grew by just 2.3%. Most of that growth was self-generated. No program built it. Community did.

When AB 626 legalized microenterprise home kitchens, it didn't create a new industry. It recognized one that had already been feeding the city, and formalized what Latinas like Doña Florinda had been building long before the law had a category for them.

That is the lesson Doña Florinda's story carries beyond her kitchen. The informal-to-formal pipeline is not a bootstrap story; it is a structural feature of the LA economy, running through food, construction, logistics, landscaping, and transportation. When leaders design systems that recognize what already works, the economy accelerates.

Leaders who know this region understand they cannot design economic systems without the Latino community in mind. The economy depends on it. The data proves it.

Today, Doña Florinda runs a restaurant. Her food — the same recipes — fills a room where every table reflects Los Angeles: Anglo, Black, Asian, Latino, all eating together. Her culture was never a niche. It was the market.

**Claudia Moreno,**  
*Manager of Industry and Special Projects,  
LAEDC*



# DEL PUESTO AL NEGOCIO

## Latinos own 1 in 4 businesses. They collect 4 cents of every dollar.

### 27.2%

Share of businesses  
in LA County

### 374K

Latino-owned firms  
in LA County

Latino-owned businesses are the corner stores, the construction crews, the catering companies, and the logistics operations built from the ground up — often without institutional capital or a pathway to scale.

This is not a formation problem.  
It is a scaling problem.

### WHERE BUSINESSES STALL

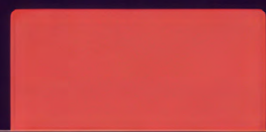
The pipeline exists.  
The transition to scale does not.

### 30.3%



Solo operators  
(no employees)

### 8.7%



Employer firms  
(1+ employees)

Latinos own **30.3%** of all solo-operator businesses — the highest ownership share of any group at that tier.

### THE GROWTH STORY

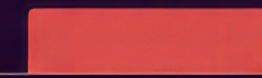
Latino business formation is outpacing every other segment.

### 44%



Latino-owned  
business growth  
(5-year growth)

### 2.3%



Overall business  
formation  
(5-year growth)

Over five years, Latino-owned businesses grew roughly **20 times** the overall business formation rate in LA County.



**THIS IS NOT A FORMATION PROBLEM.  
THIS IS A SCALING PROBLEM.**

If Latino-owned firms captured revenue in proportion to their share of businesses, the economic impact would be transformational for Los Angeles County.

## Partner Perspective

# Giving A Reason To Stay And Grow Locally

Gentefy, as a company, was the starting point for everything my wife and I built. It began with a belief that the neighborhoods we come from deserve the same level of investment, design, and experience as anywhere else in Los Angeles. We asked ourselves what we could create that would bring people together, center families, and give them a reason to stay and grow locally, not feel like they have to leave the communities they grew up in to experience something better.

That belief led us to study how some of the most vibrant cities in the world, Barcelona, Paris, & Mexico City, organize community life. Their energy is anchored in shared spaces: plazas filled with food, retail, and cultural programming that act as both social and economic hubs. We set out to build a version of that for our communities.

Blvd Mrkt was our first execution. The idea was simple: build a “micro food hall” that could serve as an economic anchor for downtown Montebello; a place where the local community could gather, feel connected, and even open a business. At the time, we introduced one of the first food incubator models in Los Angeles County where entrepreneurs could operate from a shared kitchen and sell directly to the public. Now, nearly five years in, Blvd Mrkt has evolved into an extension of people’s homes, a living room for the community, and a catalyst for the city’s local economy.

In addition to Blvd Mrkt, we’ve opened Alchemy Craft, a craft beer and wine bar, and are launching Dulce Mala, an artisan churro and dessert concept inside our incubator. Each builds on the same foundation: creating spaces that are culturally relevant, accessible, and rooted in the communities they serve.

Our goal is to meet people where they are while helping bridge them to their aspirations—without being elitist or unapproachable. Through programming, music, food, and design, we create environments where people feel seen, represented, connected, and inspired.

What it takes to build, sustain, and grow this kind of work in Los Angeles reveals something deeper about the regional economy. The challenge is not a lack of demand, it is a lack of alignment between capital, policy, and community scale development. There is strong, consistent demand for culturally relevant, community-centered spaces like ours, spaces that drive foot traffic, support small business formation, and keep economic activity local, especially as society becomes more digitally centered. Yet access to flexible, patient capital that understands smaller-format, high-impact models remains limited.

At the same time, rising construction and operating costs, complex permitting processes, and systems not designed for small operators create friction at every stage of growth. These constraints don’t just impact individual businesses like ours, they limit the scalability of models that can activate underutilized corridors, generate jobs, and expand local ownership.

Our experience highlights a broader opportunity: when capital structures, policy frameworks, and development strategies align with how communities actually function, these models can scale and deliver measurable economic impact across neighborhoods.

Gentefy represents the long-term evolution of this work. We are not a transactional developer, we are long-term partners committed to planting deep roots and investing in places, people, and programming. We work alongside cities, local leaders, and residents to support responsible development that strengthens communities without displacing them.

The future of Los Angeles’ economy will be shaped by those who don’t just participate in it, but who intentionally build the environments where economic activity happens. With the right alignment, the impact of this work can scale far beyond what currently exists.



**Barney Santos,**  
CEO and Founder,  
Gentefy

**“It began with a belief that the neighborhoods we come from deserve the same level of investment, design, and experience as anywhere else in Los Angeles.”**

gentefy

# La Cultura es Capital

## Creative Economy

For decades the industry treated Latino culture as a side door — regional, ethnic, Spanish-language, someone else’s market. Los Angeles always knew better.

On the Eastside, in the garages and church halls and quinceañera stages of Boyle Heights and East LA, this city has been producing global culture for decades. Los Lobos came out of Garfield High. Ritchie Valens came out of Pacoima. Jenni Rivera — born in Long Beach, raised in East LA — sang banda and norteño to sold-out arenas across two countries without softening a single note. The lowrider became a museum exhibit. The murals became postcards. The culture that was called a side door became the aesthetic the world pays to consume.

And before any of that — there was the food. Ese camión de tacos — that taco truck — at 5am feeding the film crew before the cameras roll. La panadería — the bakery — on César Chávez that has outlasted three recessions and one pandemic. The abuela whose tamales became a catering company whose catering company became a restaurant whose restaurant became the hottest table in the city. Latino food is not a segment of the LA culinary economy. It is its backbone — the kitchens, the supply chains, the early morning crews, the late night vendors that keep the whole thing running.

The numbers say what the industry spent decades pretending wasn’t true. Latino artists don’t cross over into mainstream venues — they sell them out. Every major arena in Los Angeles. Every festival. Every stage. In Spanish, in Spanglish, in the sound that was born in the garages and church halls of the Eastside and is now the sound the world chases.

La Cultura Es Capital — the culture is capital. The music, the food, the visual language of this city — the aesthetic that the world buys when it buys Los Angeles — was built here, in these communities, by these families.

It was never a side door. It was always the main entrance.



**Pablo Martinez,**  
*Asst. Program Manager,  
Workforce Development,  
LAEDC*



# La Cultura Es Capital

THE CULTURE IS THE ECONOMY

Latino audiences drive film and streaming demand at scale across Los Angeles and the United States. The industry benefits from that demand, but it does not reflect it in who creates, leads, or appears on screen.

## FILM & TELEVISION

### AUDIENCE DEMAND

Latinos drive outsized participation across film and streaming.



3.3x

Films Seen Per Capita Annually

### REPRESENTATION GAP

On screen and behind the camera, representation does not match the audience.



LATINO CHARACTERS IN LA-SET SHOWS



CHARACTERS IN TOP BROADCAST SERIES



LEADING ROLES IN TOP BROADCAST SERIES

THE AUDIENCE IS PRESENT.

REPRESENTATION IS NOT.

## MUSIC

# La Música Marca el Mercado

THE SOUND OF THE MARKET

Latino music is not emerging. It is already the dominant growth driver in the industry.

#1

FASTEST-GROWING MUSIC GENRE IN THE UNITED STATES

16 OF 25

TOP STREAMED SONGS IN LOS ANGELES BY LATINO ARTISTS

*What was once regional now defines global demand.*

## Partner Perspective

# If we do not tell our stories, someone else will.

At the Latino Theater Company, we have always believed that if we do not tell our own stories, someone else will, and they will not get them right. So our work begins there.

In Los Angeles, that responsibility carries weight. Latinos are not a segment of this city. We are central to its identity. And yet, for many years, the stories told about us in the mainstream have been narrow. From the beginning, our work has been a conscious response to that. We chose to tell stories that reflect the fullness of our community. Professionals, families, students, people with complexity, ambition, and dignity.

That choice has consequences. When people see themselves represented with truth, it expands what they believe is possible. And when others encounter those same stories, it shifts perception. It influences where attention goes, where resources go, and who is included in the future of a city. Representation is not symbolic. It shapes opportunity.

For more than four decades, the Latino Theater Company has been a place where new voices take shape, not only writers, but actors, directors, designers, and technical artists. It is where artists develop their craft, where careers begin, and where audiences, especially young people, can recognize themselves not on the margins, but at the center of the story. This is not a niche contribution. It is part of the cultural foundation of Los Angeles.

As Los Angeles prepares to host the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the city will be seen by the world. But the question is not only how we host, it is how we represent ourselves. Los Angeles is not defined by a single culture, but by the relationships between cultures. It is a city in constant exchange, where new identities are formed every day. What we share during that global moment should reflect that reality. A living, evolving culture shaped by many voices.

Our work lives inside that idea. Rooted in the Latino experience, but always in dialogue with a broader world. That is what makes it both deeply local and inherently global.

Through our education programs, new play development, and community initiatives, we are not only producing theatre. We are creating pathways for artists, building audiences, and strengthening a cultural infrastructure that supports our communities and creates real opportunity. This is how a city invests in its future.



**José Luis Valenzuela,**

*President,  
Latino Theater Co.*

**25**  
YEARS

**LA Latino International  
Film Festival**

LALIFF — one of the longest-running  
Latino film institutions in the US

**18**  
YEARS

**Hola Mexico  
Film Festival**

The largest Mexican film festival  
outside of Mexico — based in LA

**15**  
YEARS

**Guadalajara Film  
Festival LA (GLAFF)**

Connecting the LA-Mexico creative  
corridor for over a decade



# LA CULTURA SE CONVIERTE EN NEGOCIO

## CULTURE BECOMES COMMERCE

Latino-owned accommodation and food businesses are not a niche — they are a foundational part of the Los Angeles County economy, creating jobs, building wealth, and strengthening communities.



### By the Numbers

**29%**

OF ALL FIRMS



Latino-owned firms in the accommodation & food sector, LA County 2023

**39%**

OF NONEMPLOYER FIRMS



The solo operators — taco trucks, caterers, pop-ups — that power LA's food culture.

**18%**

OF EMPLOYER FIRMS



Latino-owned employer businesses in the accommodation & food sector, LA County 2023



### AN ECONOMIC ENGINE

**65%**

OF ACCOMMODATION & FOOD WORKFORCE

LATINO WORKERS, LA COUNTY



From the kitchen to the front of house, Latino workers are the backbone of Los Angeles County's food economy.

### THE LADDER TO GROWTH

Most Latino food businesses start small. The challenge is scaling up.



- **39%** NONEMPLOYER FIRMS
- **18%** EMPLOYER FIRMS
- **43%** OTHER FIRMS

Most businesses are in the earliest stage of growth — from survival to sustainability.

### WHERE CULTURE FEEDS THE ECONOMY



TACO TRUCKS



CATERERS



RESTAURANTS



CAFÉS



FOOD PRODUCERS

From street corners to fine dining, Latino food entrepreneurs create experiences that define Los Angeles — and attract visitors, investment, and pride.

**OUR FOOD. OUR BUSINESSES. OUR FUTURE.**

Investing in Latino food businesses is investing in the future of Los Angeles County.

**CULTURE BUILDS IT. OWNERSHIP SCALES IT.**



SOURCES

Latino Donor Collaborative, The 2025 Official LDC U.S. Latino GDP Report, Part One - McKinsey & Company, Latinos in Hollywood: Amplifying voices, expanding horizons US Census, 2023 County Business Patterns 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Partner Perspective

# Latino food is not a story. It's an economy.

Los Angeles is the most important Latino food city in the United States — not just by population, but by the sheer scale of what Latino families have built here. Latino-owned businesses make up 12% of all employer businesses in LA County, the second-highest share of any county in the country. Accommodation and food services — restaurants, catering, food trucks — is one of the top three industries where those businesses concentrate. Nationally, Latino-owned businesses in this sector are part of an economy that employed 3.5 million people and generated over \$653 billion in revenue in 2022 alone. The LA slice of that is enormous, and it is undercounted.

What makes this community extraordinary is how it's built. It starts in a home kitchen — tamales sold through a WhatsApp group, a weekend pupusa operation out of a minivan. It moves to the sidewalk: an elotero, a taquera with a folding table, a paletero who has memorized every apartment complex in a three-mile radius. Then the food truck. Then the brick-and-mortar. LA County has an estimated 10,000 sidewalk food vendors, the vast majority from Latino communities — each one a potential restaurant owner waiting for a system that meets them where they are. This is not an informal economy. It is the formal economy in formation.

And Latino food has never been separate from Latino culture. The restaurant hosting the quinceañera is booking the DJ who will play other venues. The food truck outside the concert is feeding the crew who loaded in the stage. The kitchen catering the Eastside art show is run by the family whose mural is on the building next door. Food, music, art, and commerce — in Latino Los Angeles, these are not parallel industries. They are the same industry.

That is the work of the Latino Restaurant Association. Across more than 800 member restaurants in LA County (1400+ total membership), we fight legislation that would crush thin-margin operators, advocate for fair delivery platform policies, and connect food entrepreneurs to the capital and infrastructure they need to formalize and scale. This is economic development — not community support, not cultural programming. The sooner the region's institutions treat it that way, the sooner this economy reaches its full scale.



**Lily Rocha,**  
CEO,  
*Latino Restaurant Association*

**"When a grandmother sells her pupusas on a sidewalk in Pico Union, she is not participating in an informal economy — she is building the formal economy that comes next. Our job is to make sure that next chapter actually comes, and that when it does, she still owns it."**



# DEL ESFUERZO AL CAPITAL.

The Businesses Exist. The Capital Does Not Scale With Them.

Latino-owned businesses are one of the fastest-growing ownership segments in Los Angeles County. But the transition from formation to scale remains structurally constrained.

## THE OWNERSHIP-REVENUE GAP

**27.2%**

SHARE OF BUSINESSES

Latino-owned businesses in Los Angeles County

VS.

**3.8%**

SHARE OF BUSINESS REVENUE

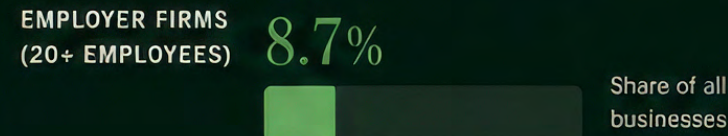
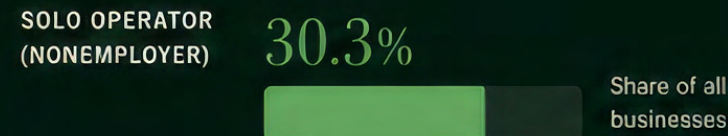
Generated by Latino-owned businesses in Los Angeles County

One in four businesses.

Less than four cents of every dollar.

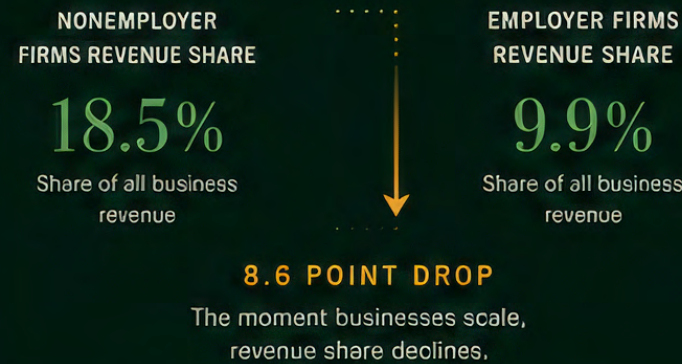
### 1. WHERE BUSINESSES STALL

Most remain nonemployer firms.



### 2. THE SCALING PENALTY

Revenue falls as businesses formalize.



### 3. BUSINESS FORMATION GROWTH (2017-2022)

LATINO-OWNED BUSINESS GROWTH



Growth in Latino-owned businesses

OVERALL BUSINESS GROWTH



Growth in all businesses

### 4. THE TRANSITION GAP

The pipeline exists. The transition to scale does not.



# LOS ANGELES COUNTY IS OPERATING BELOW ITS BUSINESS CAPACITY.

When Latino-owned businesses cannot scale, Los Angeles County leaves economic opportunity on the table.

## WHAT THE REGION LOSES



**Fewer middle-market firms are created.**  
Too few businesses transition from small operations to major regional employers.



**Lower retained local wealth.**  
Less revenue is captured and reinvested in local communities and neighborhoods.



**Weaker commercial corridors and ecosystems.**  
Reduced density of strong businesses limits corridor vitality and economic activity.



**Lower institutional procurement participation.**  
Underrepresentation in public and corporate supply chains persists.



**Slower regional reinvestment and job creation.**  
Fewer scaled firms means fewer high-quality jobs and limited multiplier effects.



**Reduced economic resilience.**  
The region becomes more vulnerable to economic shocks and slower recoveries.

Latino-owned businesses are among the fastest-growing ownership segments in Los Angeles County.

But growth without proportional capital access constrains enterprise scale and limits the region's economic return.



The region benefits from the output. **TOO LITTLE OF THE VALUE IS RETAINED.**

# Generaciones En Los Angeles

## Digital Roundtable

In every successful Latino business in Los Angeles, there is cultura. From our familia to our gente in our comunidades and most importantly, everyone who believed before there was anything to believe in.

Cultura is more than tradition. It is echando una mano. It is showing up, standing together, and understanding that no one builds anything alone. Son los cimientos of real teamwork, not just inside the business, but across the entire comunidad that surrounds it.

Without the encouragement, love, and sacrifice our gente poured into our sueños, nuestras puertas would be closed. Giving back can be given in various ways, creating opportunities, showing appreciation, or simply being the example of leadership your team deserves.

You cannot expect a customer or client to feel cared for if your own team is not taken care of first. That starts from the inside out.

Reminding the next generation of our cultura keeps the doors open and keeps our comunidades feliz. Generational wealth does not happen by luck, it happens because someone decided their dream was worth passing down.

Cultura alone does not always guarantee survival, but it does show that Latino business owners learn from their cultura to ensure the next generation succeeds. Business owners llegaron, se quedaron y lideran con el ejemplo.



**Rafael Contreras,**  
Regional Manager,  
LAEDC



**Jorvin Avila,**  
Strategic Engagement  
Coordinator,  
LAEDC



## THREE GENERATIONS IN ACTION

Different starting points. Shared determination. One unfinished climb.



### PRIMERA GENERACIÓN

## 01 LLEGARON Y CONSTRUYERON DESDE CERO.

Convirtieron el trabajo duro en oportunidad. Su enfoque está en sobrevivir, servir a la comunidad y construir algo propio.

#### ENFOQUE PRINCIPAL:

Supervivencia, comunidad, construir legado.



### SEGUNDA GENERACIÓN

## 02 FORMALIZARON, ESCALARON Y GANARON LEGITIMIDAD.

Profesionalizaron los negocios familiares, crearon empleos y abrieron nuevas puertas. Aun así, el acceso al capital sigue limitado.

#### ENFOQUE PRINCIPAL:

Crecimiento, credibilidad, reinversión.



### TERCERA GENERACIÓN

## 03 LIDERAN HOY. COMPITEN POR OPORTUNIDADES INSTITUCIONALES.

Buscan contratos más grandes, capital institucional e influencia a escala. El sistema no fue diseñado para ellos.

#### ENFOQUE PRINCIPAL:

Escala, influencia, transformación sistémica.



Tres generaciones. Un mismo impulso emprendedor.

El siguiente paso depende de si Los Angeles County construye la infraestructura para que puedan escalar.

## Partner Perspectives

# Llegaron, Se Quedaron, Están Liderando



**Beatriz D Porto**

Co-Owner of  
**Porto's Bakery**

(6 Locations in Southern California)



**Juan Sanjuan III**

Owner of  
**Gloria's Restaurant and Glo**

(7823 Pacific Blvd Huntington Park, CA 90255)



**Silvia Olmos**

Owner of  
**Sylvia's Pupuseria**

(5400 S Avalon Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90011)

### Q: What did you build — and what did it actually take to build it in Los Angeles?

**Beatriz:** We built a bakery and cafe - but more than that, we built a space for our community. What started as a small mom-and-pop grew into something much bigger than we ever imagined. Today, 47 years later, we have six locations, with another on the way. Building this in Los Angeles took years of hard work, sacrifice, and resilience. We succeeded by focusing on quality, fair pricing, and giving back to the community while remaining true to our values.

**Juan:** I built on my family's legacy by helping grow Gloria's Restaurant and creating Gloria's Express to offer healthier options for our community. Building in Los Angeles County took years of hands-on work. I started at 10 years old and had a deep commitment to quality, culture, and consistency. It meant adapting to a competitive market while staying true to our roots.

**Silvia:** I built a Salvadoran food business based on my culture and hard work. Building it in Los Angeles took years of sacrifice, saving money, working long hours, and starting without support or connections. It meant learning as I went and taking risks just to stay open.

### Q: What have you passed forward to the next generation of your business or your community — and what were you not yet able to give?

**Beatriz:** We're now beginning to pass the business on to the third generation of our family, which is something I am very proud of. I've tried to lead by example by sharing the values passed down to us: hard work, leadership, discipline, being frugal, and saving. You cannot build something lasting if you're spending everything you earn. When I speak with business owners or emerging leaders, I always emphasize the importance of giving back. The community is what made our business possible in the first place. What comes in must go out. It's important to stay connected, mentor young entrepreneurs, share your knowledge, and show up for your community.

**Juan:** I've passed forward our family values, hard work, pride in our culture, and the idea that food brings people together. I've also tried to lead by example for the next generation.

**Silvia:** I've passed on hard work, pride in our culture, and the belief that owning a business is possible.

### Q: What does the Latino business community in LA still need — from institutions, from policy, from capital — to compete at the level this region demands?

**Beatriz:** The Latino business community in Los Angeles needs better access to information and education about the resources that already exist. When we first started, we had no idea there were programs for business development, grants, or technical assistance. Today, there's much more support available, but many Latino entrepreneurs still aren't aware of it. Many business owners are working long hours just to keep their doors open — they don't have the time or capacity to go look for resources on their own. Institutions and government need to make a stronger effort to meet business owners where they are — clearer communication, more accessible programs, and a more proactive approach to outreach. Policies should also give small businesses time to adapt, especially after challenges like COVID-19, which many are still recovering from.

**Juan:** The Latino business community in Los Angeles still needs better access to capital, government contracting, and support that understands our culture. We also need stronger networks and policies that help small, family-owned businesses grow and compete in a demanding market.

**Silvia:** The Latino business community in Los Angeles still needs fair access to capital, clear information about resources, and support in our language. We also need stronger networks and tools to help our businesses grow and compete.



**The First Generation: The entrepreneur who arrived and built from nothing who created economic infrastructure before the institutions were ready to recognize it.**

**Q: When you started your business in Los Angeles, what did the market see — and what did it miss about what you were building?**

**Silvia:** When I started my business in Los Angeles, the market saw just another small food business, but it missed the story, sacrifice, and vision behind it. I am a Salvadoran immigrant who started a Salvadoran food business, inspired by my mother and our shared love for cooking. In El Salvador, entrepreneurship is common, and I always dreamed of being my own boss. After working in Disney Catering for 15 years to save capital, I opened my business 20 years ago. In the beginning, it was very difficult as no one in the community knew us, and there were times we didn't even break even. Still, I remained committed, believing that things would improve with hard work. What the market didn't see was the resilience, cultural value, and long-term dedication behind the business.

**Q: How did you access capital, customers, and contracts without the networks the system was designed to give you — and what did that cost you?**

**Silvia:** Accessing capital, customers, and contracts without established networks was one of my biggest challenges. I relied on personal savings and high-interest credit cards because I wasn't aware of other funding options available to small businesses. I was learning how to run a business while actively operating it, all while facing language barriers and a lack of access to digital tools. All of this came at a high cost, both financially and personally. It requires constant sacrifice, long hours, and uncertainty, but it also reflects perseverance, adaptability, and a deep commitment to building something of my own.

**The Second Generation: The business owner who took what their family built and formalized it, scaled it, and made it legible to institutions that had long overlooked it.**

**Q: What did formalizing your family's business actually unlock — and what did it cost you to get there?**

**Juan:** Formalizing my family's business helped us grow, build credibility, and reach more customers. It opened the door to new opportunities and allowed us to expand with concepts like Gloria's Express. However, it also came with costs, time, paperwork, and learning systems we weren't familiar with. It required a lot of effort to transition from a family-run operation to a more structured business.

**Q: Where did the financial and institutional systems meet you — and where did you still have to fight to be taken seriously?**

**Juan:** Some systems, like basic licensing and operations, gave us a starting point. But when it came to accessing capital, guidance, and long-term support, we often had to figure things out on our own. As a Latino, family-owned business, we had to work harder to be taken seriously and to navigate systems that weren't always built with us in mind.

**The Third Generation The business leader now competing for major contracts, accessing institutional capital, and building at a scale previous generations couldn't reach.**

**Q: How does your family's economic history show up in the way you run your business today — in the decisions you make, the risks you take, the customers you serve?**

**Beatriz:** Our family's economic history shows up in everything we do. We run our business the same way my mother ran her kitchen, with care, discipline, and a commitment to quality. She always told us, "Don't put anything in front of a customer that you wouldn't serve your own family." That standard still guides us today. We also understand that many of our customers are large, hardworking families, and we want them to feel like they can come in, sit down, and enjoy an affordable meal together. Our decisions are always centered around people — both our customers and our team. Great customer service starts with how you treat your team members. We lead with respect, create opportunities for growth, and invest in our employees by offering benefits like health insurance and a 401(k). You can't grow a business without your people.

**Q: What does competing at the institutional level look like for a Latino business owner in Los Angeles right now - what has opened up, and what walls are still there?**

**Beatriz:** Competing at the institutional level as a Latino business owner in Los Angeles is still very challenging. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the food industry hard, and many businesses are still recovering. The biggest gap is awareness — many business owners don't know what support is available or how to access it. We need clearer communication and more hands-on guidance from institutions. Rising labor and goods costs are putting pressure on small businesses, and policies often feel disconnected from those realities. We need a more pro-business approach that gives businesses the flexibility and support to recover and grow. Immigrant entrepreneurs bring strong work ethic and drive, but they're often navigating without the support they need. If we can better connect people to resources and opportunities, Latino businesses will be better positioned to compete and succeed.





## Foreign direct investment has a definition.

Capital that crosses a border. Establishes a productive presence. Creates jobs. Gets counted.

But the definition was built for one kind of investor. And it has been missing another kind entirely.

Every month Latino families across Los Angeles make a decision. How much to send home. To Oaxaca. To El Salvador. To Guatemala. To Colombia. Billions flow from this city to Latin America every year – more than most countries invest in the region. By every conventional measure that capital left the economy. It was counted as an outflow. Una transferencia – a transfer. Money gone.

But it did not disappear.

It built housing. Funded small businesses. Kept entire regional economies moving. And then – through the trust and market knowledge those transfers created – it came back. In the form of Latin American corporations choosing Los Angeles as their US headquarters. In the form of bilateral business relationships that no incentive package could have manufactured. In the form of investment that followed the community because the community was already here.

Latinos in Los Angeles are not the recipients of foreign direct investment. They are among its most prolific generators – investing simultaneously in this economy and in the economies their families came from. Creating returns in both directions. Counted in neither.

That is not a measurement gap. That is a fundamental misreading of who los inversionistas – the investors – actually are.

Reframe the measurement and the picture changes completely. The family sending money home every month is not a transfer statistic. They are a cross-border investor. The entrepreneur who built a business here on family capital from Guadalajara is not an informal economy participant. They are a foreign direct investor – one who brought capital across a border, established a productive presence, and created jobs.

La Conexión – the connection. The investment has always been here. The measurement just has not caught up.

**Olivia Zhang,**  
Program Manager,  
WTCLA | LAEDC



# LA CONEXIÓN GLOBAL

## Reframing the Investor

Latino communities are not adjacent to global capital flows. They are one of the mechanisms through which capital moves between Los Angeles County and Latin America.



GLOBAL INVESTMENT IS OFTEN MOVING THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS INSTITUTIONS DO NOT FORMALLY RECOGNIZE AS INVESTMENT INFRASTRUCTURE.

### LATIN AMERICAN CORPORATE PRESENCE IN LA COUNTY



### ESTABLISHMENTS BY COUNTRY, 2026



Spanning Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Colombia and more — number of business locations, 2026

### WHY LOS ANGELES COUNTY BENEFITS

**Cross-border entrepreneurship**  
Creates firms, jobs, supplier relationships, and regional market expansion.

**Family and community capital**  
Often fills financing gaps before institutional capital arrives.

**Embedded global networks**  
Reduce friction for trade, labor mobility, and business formation.



**\$160B+**  
U.S. remittances to Latin America

2024 — more than most countries invest in the region



**\$64.7B**  
sent to Mexico alone

More than Mexico earns from oil exports annually



**18**  
Latin American consulates in LA County

The diplomatic infrastructure of the bilateral relationship

“ **THE COMMUNITY NETWORK IS ALSO AN ECONOMIC NETWORK.** ”

The same relationships that sustain migration also sustain investment, entrepreneurship, trade, and regional growth.

Sources: WTCA and LAEDC Institute for Applied Economics. Foreign Direct Investment in California 2026. Search Results: LA County Consulate Offices. National remittance data from Banco de México and World Bank 2024.

## Partner Perspective

# Shared prosperity: Mexico's Enduring Role in Los Angeles' Economy

When we speak of Latinos in Los Angeles, we speak of a community whose roots, stories, and family ties are deeply intertwined with Mexico. Nearly half of the county's population identifies as Latino, and a significant majority traces its heritage to Mexico. This is also why I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this space: the community we serve at the Consulate General of Mexico in Los Angeles is an essential part of this story.

From an economic perspective, Mexico has long played a meaningful role in Los Angeles through sustained investment. For years, Mexico has ranked among the leading sources of foreign direct investment in the region, contributing to job creation and economic growth. Companies such as CEMEX, Bimbo Bakeries, Chedraui USA, and GRUMA are deeply embedded in the daily life of Los Angeles through their U.S. operations. At the same time, newer ventures like Dr. Simi on Hollywood Boulevard or El Moro in Echo Park reflect a dynamic and evolving business relationship that continues to expand.

Yet not all contributions can be measured through formal investment flows. The everyday economic activity of the Mexican diaspora, its labor, entrepreneurship, and deep commitment to the place it calls home, is equally vital. There is something uniquely dynamic about this community: a constant exchange of people, ideas, and culture between Los Angeles and Mexico. In fact, Mexico is the country with the highest number of flights to LAX, underscoring a level of connectivity that fuels commerce, innovation, and opportunity on both sides of the border.

Latinos, many of them of Mexican origin, are also driving entrepreneurship at a remarkable pace. They account for a considerably large share of new businesses in the United States, far exceeding their share of population. According to the Latino Donor Collaborative, Latino-founded businesses have grown 2.5 times faster than the national average in recent years. This tells a powerful story: it is not only a workforce, but a series of communities of builders and job creators actively shaping the economic future of Los Angeles.

Beyond large multinational firms, what stands out most is the entrepreneurial energy and resilience of the Mexican community. At the Consulate, we witness this every day. Through initiatives such as Mexicana Emprende, we target self-employed women entrepreneurs, whom we support by providing tools, mentorship, and connections to help them start or expand their small businesses. These efforts translate into new enterprises, job creation, prosperity, and stronger neighborhoods across the region.

In many ways, to understand the economy of Los Angeles is to understand Mexico's presence within it. It is a story of resilience, entrepreneurship, and shared prosperity, one that continues to shape the region's present and will certainly define its future.



**Carlos González Gutiérrez,**

*Consul General of  
Mexico in Los Angeles*

**"Latino-founded businesses have grown 2.5 times faster than the national average in recent years. This tells a powerful story: it is not only a workforce, but a series of communities of builders and job creators actively shaping the economic future of Los Angeles."**

**México**  
Consulado General de México  
en Los Ángeles

# El Comercio Es Poder

## Logistics

There is no accident in geography. But geography alone does not build a gateway. Los Angeles is the dominant United States entry point for the fastest growing trade corridor in the Western Hemisphere. The volume moving through this corridor is staggering — and accelerating. Billions in imports. Billions more in exports. Growing year over year at a rate that signals not a mature trade relationship but an emerging one still finding its ceiling. Los puertos — the ports — of San Pedro Bay move more than 40% of all containerized imports entering this country. LAX moves more air cargo to and from Latin America than any other gateway in the nation. Two gateways. One city. And together they form the most strategically significant trade infrastructure in the United States.

That position did not build itself. It was built over generations by a community that understood both sides of this corridor before any system did. That had the market knowledge and the fluency to move goods between two economies when nobody had yet built a platform to do it for them. El corredor — the corridor — was constructed quietly. By workers, truckers, freight operators, and entrepreneurs who saw the opportunity and built their livelihoods inside it. Who learned the routes, the regulations, the relationships. Who showed up before the systems were formalized and stayed after they were.

And that contribution has never been formally counted as what it actually is — la arquitectura — the architecture — of a national economic asset worth billions. That is not a workforce story. That is an ownership story. A nation-building story. A story of a community that helped construct one of the most strategically significant economic corridors in the country and has yet to be recognized as its architects.

El Comercio Es Poder — commerce is power. And the architects of this corridor have always been here.



**Mariana Hernandez,**  
Program Manager,  
LAEDC



# EL SISTEMA DE ENTRADA

*Different Gateways. One Global System.*

Los Angeles County is the dominant U.S. entry point for the fastest-growing trade corridor in the Western Hemisphere. The system moves through ports, airports, rail, and warehouses—already embedded across the region.



### THE SYSTEM BY THE NUMBERS

**40%+**

OF ALL U.S. CONTAINERIZED IMPORTS move through San Pedro Bay — the Ports of LA and Long Beach combined.



**90.7%**

EXPORT GROWTH YEAR OVER YEAR  
\$11.8B in exports to Latin America in 2024. The corridor is accelerating.



**\$22.1B**

TOTAL LA-LATIN AMERICA TRADE | TWO-WAY TRADE  
Los Angeles is the most commercially connected U.S. city to the fastest-growing trade region in the world.



### THE GATEWAYS THAT POWER THE EXPORT STORY

**LAX DOMINATES THE EXPORT STORY.**

**\$11.8B**

LAX AIR CARGO — TOTAL EXPORTS, 2024  
LAX moves more air cargo to and from Latin America than any other gateway in the nation.

**PORTS ANCHOR REGIONAL TRADE FLOWS.**

PORT OF LOS ANGELES **\$5.5B**

PORT OF LONG BEACH **\$4.7B**

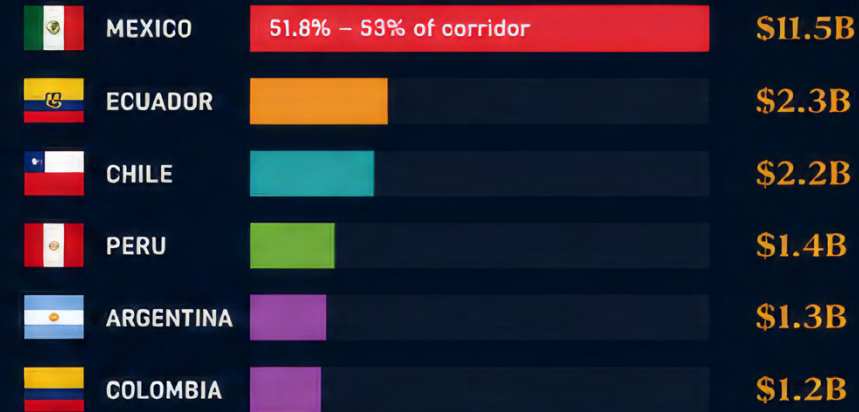
LA-Latin America trade, 2024



### ONE INTEGRATED LOGISTICS SYSTEM



### TOP TRADING PARTNERS — LA COUNTY TO LATIN AMERICA, 2024



**DIFFERENT GATEWAYS. ONE INTEGRATED TRADE SYSTEM.**

Air cargo, ports, rail, warehousing, and regional distribution operate as a connected logistics network across Los Angeles County.



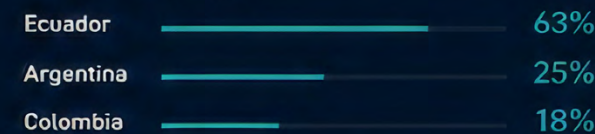
### TOP IMPORT & EXPORT COMMODITIES

#### TOP IMPORT

**\$3.67B**

MINERAL FUELS & OILS

#### SOURCE BREAKDOWN



#### TOP EXPORT

**\$6.95B**

MACHINERY & BOILERS

#### DESTINATION BREAKDOWN



### LATINO WORKFORCE IN TRANSPORTATION & WAREHOUSING

**56%**

of transportation & warehousing workers in LA County are Latino.

*The corridor does not move without them.*



Sources: WTCA and LAEDC Institute for Applied Economics. Foreign Direct Investment in California 2026. Search Results: LA County Consulate Offices. National remittance data from Banco de México and World Bank 2024.

## Partner Perspective

# El Comercio Es Poder Es Poder

My first language was Spanish. I grew up in Baldwin Park, the son of parents from Mexico who worked in manufacturing and never finished high school but made sure I would. They taught me that work is dignity and that opportunity, when it arrives, is something you build on for the people coming behind you. Today, I lead the Port of Long Beach, one of the busiest container ports in the United States. I do not take that lightly.

The Los Angeles/Long Beach region has deep cultural and commercial ties to Latin America. And trade with Latin America is important – for example, Mexico is the United States' top trading partner, with nearly \$873 billion in two-way trade in 2025. Imported and exported vehicles, auto parts, electronics, fuels and consumer goods connect our economies – our factories, farms and households to everywhere from Tijuana to São Paulo.

In 2025, the Port of Long Beach moved a record amount of container cargo – 9.9 million container units. None of it moves without the Latinos of the workforce. Latino longshore workers, truckers, mechanics, engineers and dispatchers keep cargo moving through this gateway every day. Latino-owned trucking firms, freight forwarders, contractors and suppliers are woven through our supply chain and our contracting base. This is not a supporting role. It is the foundation. The gateway works because of the people who power it.

Stewarding this Port means honoring where the work comes from while building the Port of the Future guided by our bold new 2050 Vision. To help us get there, we are investing \$3.2 billion over the next decade to move cargo quickly, safely and sustainably. "Pier Beast" or Pier B, our on-dock rail support facility, will more than triple our on-dock rail capacity and significantly cut truck traffic and emissions. For me, speed to market is the key to our success and rail connectivity is the key to our future. The economic relationship between Long Beach, Los Angeles and Latin America is not just about trade. It is a shared future.

This region is about to welcome the world – the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games and a decade of global attention. The trade corridor that feeds this region will only grow more important. When visitors look at our cranes, our rail yards and our cleaner, faster gateway, they should see what I see: a region where Latino communities are not just a segment of the economy. They are its foundation.

El comercio es poder.



**Dr. Noel Hacegaba,**  
CEO,  
Port of Long Beach

**"Trade with Latin America is important – for example, Mexico is the United States' top trading partner, with nearly \$873 billion in two-way trade in 2025"**



Port of  
**LONG BEACH**  
THE PORT OF CHOICE



SOLUTIONS

# Insight To Action

## Los Angeles County has already surpassed a \$1 trillion economy...

and would rank among the largest economies in the world as a standalone nation. Yet even at that scale, this report makes clear that the region is still operating below its greatest potential.

The issue is not whether Latino communities contribute to the economy. The data throughout this report demonstrates that they already power critical industries, workforce systems, entrepreneurship, healthcare, logistics, trade, recovery, and cultural production across Los Angeles County. The issue is whether regional systems are fully aligned with the communities already driving economic activity at scale.

The Affinity Report series was created to examine how leadership, investment, and institutional alignment shape economic outcomes across Los Angeles County's diverse communities. For years, LAEDC has served as a convener across business, government, education, labor, philanthropy, and community leadership. The next phase of this work is moving from insight to implementation.

Realignment requires coordinated investment across workforce development, business growth, institutional procurement, infrastructure, education, philanthropy, and capital access. This work is about building a Coalition of One - Economy for All. These actions are intended to provide practical, insight-driven solutions that strengthen alignment, expand opportunity, and support the long-term economic growth and stability of the Latino community.

The following section highlights the partnerships, strategies, and actions already advancing that work across Los Angeles County and the role LAEDC will play in helping move this effort from insight to measurable regional impact.

**Kendal R. Turner, CPA CGMA**

*Executive VP & CFO,  
LAEDC*



## Partner Perspective

# Government as a Foundation for Latino Economic Power

In Los Angeles County, inclusive economic growth does not happen by accident. It requires intentional public investment, accessible systems, and a government that understands who is driving the regional economy.

Latinos represent nearly half of Los Angeles County's population and are central to its workforce, small business ecosystem, and civic life. Designing public systems with this community in mind is both a responsibility and an opportunity. When those systems are built to be inclusive, the entire region benefits.

Government plays a critical role as connector and accelerator. That means leveraging public contracting, procurement, and permitting systems to expand access for Latino-owned businesses. It means investing in workforce development programs that create clear pathways to living-wage careers. And it means building infrastructure from transit and broadband to affordable housing that allows families to remain in the communities they helped build.

In the aftermath of the 2025 wildfires and inhumane immigration raids, that responsibility has only deepened. Recovery must be equitable and intentional, ensuring Latino families and small business owners are not left behind. It requires accessible programs, coordinated outreach, and government that meets communities where they are, including in language and in place.

Los Angeles County is home to one of the most dynamic and diverse economies in the world. When public investment centers the people and communities that sustain that economy, the entire region becomes stronger, more resilient.



**Hilda L. Solis**

*Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
Chair and First District Supervisor*



Los Angeles County Supervisor

**HILDA L. SOLIS**

First District • Chair

## Partner Perspective

# Cultivating New Leadership

At Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE), we see institutions as gatekeepers of opportunity, they are key partners in expanding Latina leadership. HOPE's Economic Status of Latinas Report highlights that Latina micro business owners are driving economic growth, yet too often lack access to capital, networks, and decision-making spaces.

Employers, financial institutions, and public agencies must move beyond acknowledgment of the current contributions Latinas make and actively invest in pathways to leadership. This includes expanding flexible financing and procurement opportunities for Latina-owned businesses, strengthening women's business centers, and embedding mentorship and leadership development into workforce systems. Community organizations play a critical role in preparing Latinas, but institutions must open doors to boards, commissions, and executive roles. When institutions align resources with the realities Latina entrepreneurs face, they do more than support businesses, they cultivate leaders. That is how we build an economy where leadership reflects the communities powering it.



**Helen Torres,**  
Chief Executive Officer of Hispanas  
Organized for Political Equality (HOPE)



## Partner Perspective

# Business as the Bedrock of Economic Stability

Businesses are the foundation of economic stability in Los Angeles. They create jobs, generate income, and sustain communities across the region. When businesses are able to grow and scale, the broader economy benefits.

The data on Latino-owned businesses makes clear that there is both strength and untapped potential. While Latino-owned businesses represent more than a quarter of all businesses in Los Angeles County, they account for a disproportionately small share of total business revenue. That gap is not just a business issue. It is an economic one. It reflects barriers to scaling, access to capital, and market opportunity that, if addressed, could unlock significant growth across the region.

Closing that gap requires a focused effort on supporting Latino-owned businesses beyond startup. Growth and scale are where long-term stability is built. That means expanding access to capital, strengthening procurement pathways, supporting workforce development, and ensuring that businesses have access to the networks and opportunities that drive revenue.

The role of the business community is to help create the conditions where that growth is possible. Through advocacy, partnership, and direct engagement with employers, organizations like the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce can help ensure that Latino-owned businesses are positioned not just to participate, but to lead in the regional economy.

Closing this gap is not optional for Los Angeles. It is a business imperative. If we are serious about long-term economic stability and growth, we must prioritize scaling Latino-owned businesses and expanding their share of revenue across the regional economy.



**Maria S. Salinas,**  
President & CEO,  
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce



LOS ANGELES AREA  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## Partner Perspective

# The Region's Future Depends on Opportunity

California State University, Dominguez Hills, is deeply committed to the Latino community in Los Angeles County. In our region, where nearly half the population, nearly half the workforce, and a growing share of the business community are Latino, the region's future depends on whether this population has full access to opportunity.

At CSUDH, 60% of our students identify as Latino, and many of them are the first in their families to earn a degree. They are entering healthcare, business, technology, public service, and more, all of which are sectors this report documents as essential to regional growth. When these students succeed, Los Angeles gains the talent and leadership it needs to compete.

Education is a core part of the region's economic infrastructure, and our commitment is to ensure education does not stop at the degree. Through employer partnerships, career development, and intentional pathways to economic mobility, CSUDH is working to close the gap between what this community has built and what it has been allowed to lead.

The talent is here, and the opportunity is here. What is required now is alignment, between institutions, employers, and capital, to ensure this generation goes as far as their preparation deserves.



**Mary Ann Villarreal,**  
Interim President,  
CSUDH

# CSUDH

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, DOMINGUEZ HILLS



## Partner Perspective

# Philanthropy as Economic Infrastructure

The California Community Foundation believes that philanthropy is a tool to bring people closer to living their idea of "A Good Life in Los Angeles". At the California Community Foundation, philanthropy is more than just part of the economic infrastructure of Los Angeles, it helps ensure that the systems shaping this economy are making a positive impact with the people driving its growth.

In Los Angeles, that begins with recognizing the scale of the Latino community. Latinos represent nearly half of the County's population and a significant share of its workforce and business activity. This is not a subset of the economy. It is a central engine of it. When that engine is undercapitalized, the entire region operates below its full potential.

As a philanthropic partner, capital can be deployed early and flexibly to support Latino-owned businesses, expand pathways to homeownership, and strengthen community-based organizations that are building economic stability at the neighborhood level. Investment in organizational capacity and in the infrastructure that enables coordination across sectors is equally critical, ensuring that efforts are not fragmented but positioned to scale.

The opportunity in front of us is clear: with the right alignment of capital and systems, the Latino economy can be one of the most powerful drivers of sustained growth and shared prosperity in Los Angeles.

Reaching that potential will require sustained focus on expanding access to capital, ownership, and opportunity. Philanthropy has a role to play in accelerating that progress.



**Miguel A. Santana,**  
President & CEO,  
California Community Foundation



California  
**COMMUNITY**  
Foundation

## Partner Perspective

# Having professional Representation

In a sector where Latinos often face representation challenges at leadership levels, Kevin serves on Google's Government Affairs and Public Policy team. In this role, he works at the intersection of public policy and technological development. His efforts connect the regulatory frameworks established by the public sector with the technical advancements occurring within the private sector.

This connection is significant because Latino communities have historically been less involved in designing and deploying new technologies. As artificial intelligence continues to evolve, it has the potential to impact the economic trends discussed in this report. Current discussions regarding how these technologies are governed and implemented will play a role in determining future outcomes for these communities.

Google maintains a presence in many Los Angeles neighborhoods central to the regional economy. Through initiatives involving small business digital tools, workforce training, and funding for community organizations partnerships, Kevin ensures our community has the resources and skills needed to succeed in the digital age.

For the Latino community, having professional representation at a major technology company provides an important perspective in ongoing industry discussions. This representation ensures that their voices are included in the conversation.

We will continue to advocate for a just recovery for the workers and small businesses impacted by the fires.



**Kevin Sanchez Morales,**  
Government Affairs & Public Policy,  
Google



## Partner Perspective

# Supporting Long-term Mobility

The San Gabriel Valley represents one of the clearest examples of why Latino economic mobility must be approached as a regional ecosystem strategy rather than through any single lens.

Latino families are contributing across every part of the regional economy as entrepreneurs, workers, students, homeowners, and community leaders. Supporting long-term mobility means connecting the systems that shape economic opportunity, including workforce development, small business growth, education, housing, infrastructure, transportation, and access to capital.

The San Gabriel Valley already has many of the assets needed to support that growth. The region continues to strengthen its role in logistics, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, international trade, and entrepreneurship, while institutions across the Valley are working together to support workforce alignment, regional collaboration, and business development. Small businesses remain central to that economic foundation.

The opportunity now is to build stronger coordination across cities, industries, educational institutions, and public and private partners so economic growth translates into broader economic participation and long-term prosperity.

The future of economic development in the San Gabriel Valley will depend on how effectively we align regional assets around a shared vision for mobility, resilience, and inclusive growth.



**Luis Portillo,**  
President & CEO,  
San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership



**SAN GABRIEL VALLEY**  
ECONOMIC  
PARTNERSHIP

## HOW WE MOVE FORWARD

The work reflected in this report points toward a clear next phase focused on strengthening systems that allow Latino leadership, data, and investment to move together. The actions below build on what is already working and are designed to support continuity, scale, and long-term regional outcomes for Los Angeles County.

### **Strengthening Collective Infrastructure** (Strategic Engagement)

LAEDC will actively secure partnerships and pursue aligned, sustained funding to launch and expand a Latino Economic Leadership Collective — focused on measurable economic outcomes for Latino communities — so the coordinated results reflected in this report can continue and scale across Los Angeles County.

### **Stewarding Regional Economic Intelligence** (Research)

For too long the full economic contribution of Latino communities has gone undercounted. LAEDC will advance a unified and accurate approach to measuring Latino economic activity in Los Angeles County — demonstrating through its inclusive, trusted, and nonpartisan work that the region requires a neutral steward to deliver shared, decision-ready insight that informs policy, investment, and program design.

### **Anchoring Workforce Systems in Industry Demand** (Workforce)

The pipeline is full. What is missing is alignment. Through industry- and place-based consortia, sector partnerships, and hiring collaboratives, LAEDC will convene employers and training systems to ensure that Latino talent moves from the foundation of this economy into its leadership — with the pathways and employer commitments to match.

### **Expanding Business Support at Scale** (Business)

Latino-owned businesses are growing faster than any other segment in the region. The opportunity is meeting that momentum with capital, coaching, and market access. LAEDC will expand business technical assistance through scalable delivery models — including large-format workshops, academies, and shared learning platforms — allowing thousands of Latino-owned businesses to access the support needed to close the revenue gap this report documents.

### **Activating Industry Clusters for Latino Economic Mobility** (Industry Cluster Development)

LAEDC will activate targeted industry clusters — including healthcare, creative economy, logistics, and emerging technology — through sector-based convenings, employer partnerships, and place-based strategies that connect Latino workers, entrepreneurs, and institutions to the industries shaping the region's economic future.

## A Final Word: When the Backbone of our Economy is Under Attack

### Lo Que No Se Puede Ignorar — What Cannot Be Ignored

This report lifts what Los Angeles has always known but never said loudly enough: Latino communities are not a footnote to this economy. They are the headline.

In 2025 the federal government turned its enforcement apparatus toward that community — launching the largest immigration operation this region has ever seen.

It must be acknowledged that immigration enforcement affected immigrant communities of many backgrounds across LA County. This was not an experience unique to Latinos alone. But it must also be said plainly: the operations specifically and disproportionately targeted Latino communities. Approximately 4,000 California National Guard troops and 700 U.S. Marines were deployed into the majority-Latino neighborhoods of a city that is nearly half Latino — the same neighborhoods, the same corridors, the same communities this report documents as essential to the economic foundation of Los Angeles County.

Seguimos aquí — we are still here. Still building. Still powering this economy. Still showing up.

We showed up to rebuild after the wildfires without being asked. We will show up to welcome the world for the World Cup, the Super Bowl, the Olympics, and Paralympic Games. We are the Angelenos who have powered this economy for generations without being fully counted — until now.

We built this region for everyone.

Los Angeles is still standing because Latinos are still standing. And when the world arrives — for the games, for the culture, for the opportunity — we will be here.

Siempre hemos estado — we have always been here.

**The backbone — la columna vertebral — holds. It always has.**



**Jose Pelayo**  
Director of Workforce Development,  
LAEDC

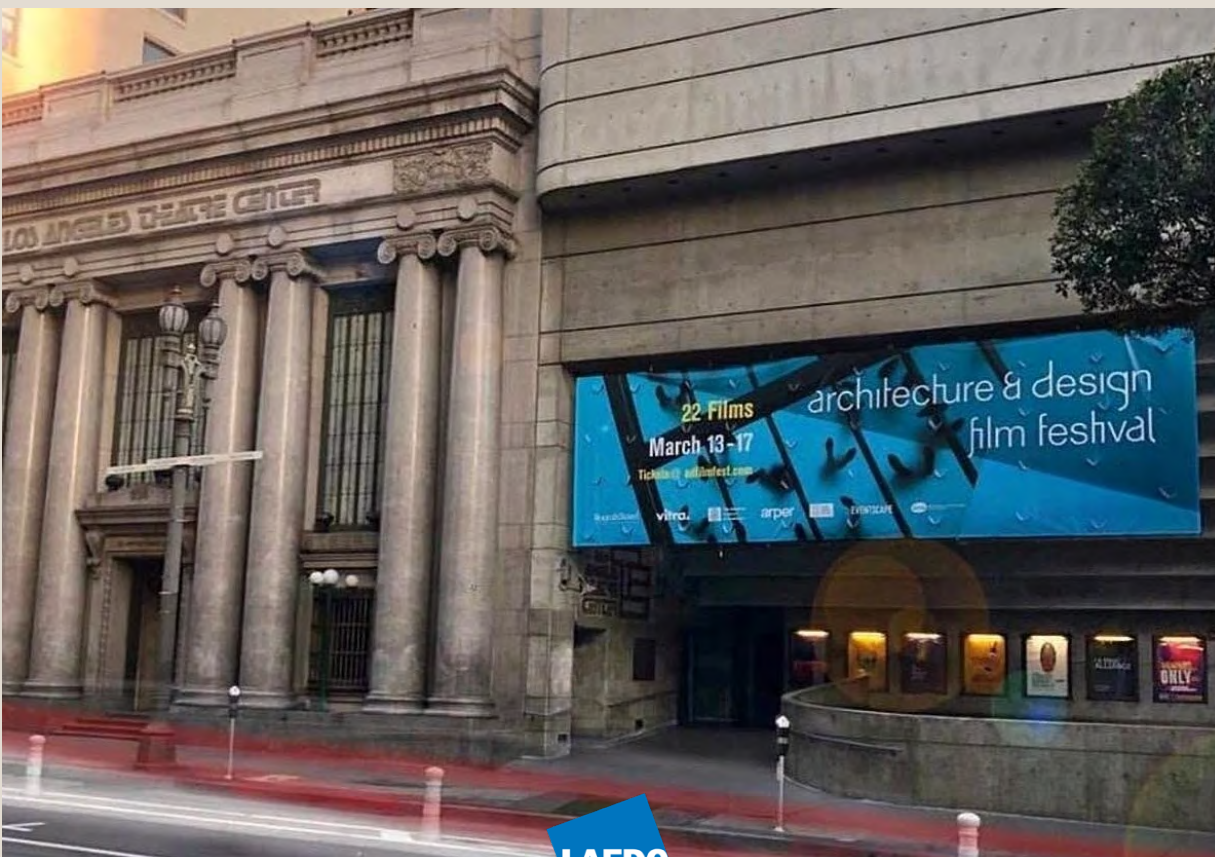


**Scarlet Peralta**  
CJF Program Director,  
LAEDC

Latino Theater Company (LTC) operates the Los Angeles Theatre Center (LATC), a Historic Landmark, and five-theater performing arts complex, in the revitalized Historic Core District of Downtown Los Angeles. We believe the theater creates empathy and educates, has the power to provoke dialogue by illuminating the social issues of our times, and can awaken the collective consciousness of a community to act in creating a better tomorrow.

LTC was founded in 1985 with the goal to establish a theater company dedicated to contributing new stories and novel methods of expression for the American theater repertoire and to increase artistic opportunities for underserved communities. As the company has evolved, our role as the lease-holder of the LATC has become critical to our mission. As we continue to explore the U.S. Latina/o/x experience in bold and contemporary terms, we program our Fall and Spring Seasons with work by local playwrights that speaks to important issues and highlights new voices within the Latina/o/x, First Nation, Black, Asian American, Jewish American and LGBTQ+ communities.

In 2007 LTC reopened the LATC after being awarded a 20-year lease, which has been extended until 2056, from the City of Los Angeles with multicultural programming that reflects the demographics of the city. The LATC houses five theaters and has a total of 80,000 square feet of performance, office and gallery space. Since running operations at the Los Angeles Theatre Center in 2007, we have produced 155 plays, created over 4,125 local jobs, and have helped 938 nonprofit organizations by providing space and the resources of our theater.



LAEDC